

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR

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SRI AUROBINDO PATHAMANDIR

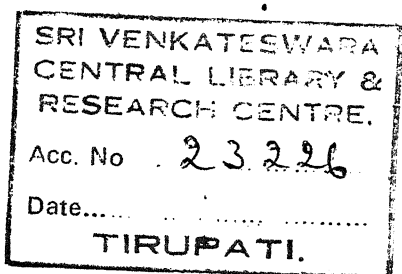
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Savitri

A Legend and a Symbol

SRI AUROBINDO

BOOK ONE
The Book of Beginnings



CANTO I

THE SYMBOL DAWN

It was the hour before the Gods awake.
Across the path of the divine Event
The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
In her unlit temple of eternity,
Lay stretched immobile upon Silence' marge.
Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable,
In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse
The abysm of the unbodied Infinite ;
A fathomless zero occupied the world.
A power of fallen boundless self, awake
Between the first and the last Nothingness
Recalling the tenebrous womb from which it came,
Turned from the insoluble mystery of birth
And the tardy process of mortality
And longed to reach its end in vacant Nought.
As in a dark beginning of all things,
A mute featureless semblance of the Unknown,
Repeating for ever the unconscious act,
Prolonging for ever the unseeing will,
Cradled the cosmic drowse of ignorant Force
Whose moved creative slumber kindles the suns
And carries our lives in its somnambulist whirl.
Athwart the vain enormous trance of Space,
Its formless stupor without mind or life,
A shadow spinning through a soulless Void,
Thrown back once more into unthinking dreams,
Earth wheeled abandoned in the hollow gulfs,
Forgetful of her spirit and her fate.
The impassive skies were neutral, empty, still.
Then something in the inscrutable darkness stirred;

A nameless movement, an unthought Idea
 Insistent, dissatisfied, without an aim,
 Something that wished but knew not how to be,
 Teased the Inconscient to wake Ignorance.
 A throe that came and left a quivering trace,
 Gave room for an old tired want unfilled,
 At peace in its subconscious moonless cave
 To raise its head and look for absent light,
 Straining closed eyes of vanished memory,
 Like one who searches for a bygone self
 And only meets the corpse of his desire.
 It was as though even in this Nought's profound,
 Even in this ultimate dissolution's core
 There lurked an unremembering entity,
 Survivor of a slain and buried past
 Condemned to resume the effort and the pang
 Reviving in another frustrate world.
 An unshaped consciousness desired light
 And a blank prescience yearned towards distant change.
 As if a childlike finger laid on a cheek
 Reminded of the endless need in things
 The heedless Mother of the universe,
 An infant longing clutched the sombre Vast.
 Insensibly somewhere a breach began:
 A long lone line of hesitating hue
 Like a vague smile tempting a desert heart
 Troubled the far rim of life's obscure sleep.
 Arrived from the other side of boundlessness
 An eye of deity pierced through the dumb deeps ;
 A scout in a reconnaissance from the sun,
 It seemed amid a heavy cosmic rest,
 The torpor of a sick and weary world,
 To seek for a spirit sole and desolate
 Too fallen to recollect forgotten bliss.

SAVITRI

Intervening in a mindless universe,
Its message crept through the reluctant hush
Calling the adventure of consciousness and joy
And, conquering Nature's disillusioned breast,
Compelled renewed consent to see and feel.
A thought was sown in the unsounded Void,
A sense was born within the darkness' depths,
A memory quivered in the heart of Time
As if a soul long dead were moved to live:
But the oblivion that succeeds the fall,
Had blotted the crowded tablets of the past,
And all that was destroyed must be rebuilt
And old experience laboured out once more.
All can be done if the God-touch is there.
A hope stole in that hardly dared to be
Amid the Night's forlorn indifference.
As if solicited in an alien world
With timid and hazardous instinctive grace,
Orphaned and driven out to seek a home
An errant marvel with no place to live,
Into a far-off nook of heaven there came
A slow miraculous gesture's dim appeal.
The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
Persuaded the inert black quietude
And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.
A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
That glowed along a fading moment's brink,
Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge
A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.
One lucent corner windowing hidden things
Forced the world's blind immensity to sight.
The darkness failed and slipped like a falling cloak
From the reclining body of a god.
Then through the pallid rift that seemed at first

Hardly enough for a trickle from the suns,
 Outpoured the revelation and the flame.
 The brief perpetual sign recurred above.
 A glamour from the unreached transcendences
 Iridescent with the glory of the Unseen,
 A message from the unknown immortal Light
 Ablaze upon creation's quivering edge,
 Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues
 And buried its seed of grandeur in the hours.
 An instant's visitor the godhead shone:
 On life's thin border awhile the Vision stood
 And bent over earth's pondering forehead curve.
 Interpreting a recondite beauty and bliss
 In colour's hieroglyphs of mystic sense,
 It wrote the lines of a significant myth
 Telling of a greatness of spiritual dawns,
 A brilliant code penned with the sky for page.
 Almost that day the epiphany was disclosed
 Of which our thoughts and hopes are signal flares;
 A lonely splendour from the invisible goal
 Almost was flung on the opaque Inane.
 Once more a tread perturbed the vacant Vasts;
 Infinity's centre, a Face of rapturous calm
 Parted the eternal lids that open heaven;
 A Form from far beatitudes seemed to near.
 Ambassadors twixt eternity and change,
 The omniscient Goddess leaned across the breadths
 That wrap the fated journeyings of the stars
 And saw the spaces ready for her feet.
 Once she half-looked behind for her veiled sun,
 Then, thoughtful, went to her immortal work.
 Earth felt the Imperishable's passage close.
 The waking ear of Nature heard her steps
 And wideness turned to her its limitless eye,

SAVITRI

And, scattered on sealed depths, her luminous smile
Kindled to fire the silence of the worlds.
All grew a consecration and a rite.
Air was a vibrant link between earth and heaven ;
The wide-winged hymn of a great priestly wind
Arose and failed upon the altar hills ;
The high boughs prayed in a revealing sky.
Here where our half-lit ignorance skirts the gulfs
On the dumb bosom of the ambiguous earth,
Here where one knows not even the step in front
And Truth has her throne on the shadowy back of doubt,
On this anguished and precarious field of toil
Outspread beneath some large indifferent gaze,
Impartial witness to our joy and bale
Our prostrate soil bore the awakening ray.
Here too the vision and prophetic gleam
Lit into miracles constant meaningless shapes ;
Then the divine afflatus, spent, withdrew,
Unwanted, fading from the mortal's range.
A sacred yearning lingered in its trace,
The worship of a Presence and a Power
Too perfect to be held by death-bound hearts,
The prescience of a marvellous birth to come.
Only a little the God-light can stay :
Spiritual beauty illumining human sight
Lines with its passion and mystery Matter's mask
And squanders eternity on a beat of Time.
As when a soul draws near the sill of birth,
Adjoining mortal time to Timelessness,
A spark of deity lost in Matter's crypt,
Its lustre vanishes in the inconscient planes,
That transitory glow of magic fire
So now dissolved in bright accustomed air.
The message ceased and waned the messenger.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

The single Call, the uncompanioned Power,
Drew back into some far-off secret world
The hue and marvel of the supernal beam:
She looked no more on our mortality.
The excess of beauty natural to God-kind
Could not uphold its claim on time-born eyes ;
Too mystic-real for space tenancy
Her body of glory was expunged from heaven:
The rarity and wonder lived no more.
There was the common light of earthly day.
Affranchised from the respite of fatigue
Once more the rumour of the speed of Life
Pursued the cycles of the blinded quest.
All sprang to their unvarying daily acts ;
The thousand peoples of the soil and tree
Obeyed the unforeseeing instant's urge,
And, leader here with his uncertain mind,
Alone who stares at the future's covered face,
Man lifted up the burden of his fate.

And Savitri too awoke among these tribes
That hastened to join the brilliant Summoner's chant
And, lured by the beauty of the apparent ways,
Acclaimed their portion of ephemeral joy.
Akin to the eternity whence she came,
No part she took in this small happiness ;
A mighty stranger in the human field,
The embodied Guest within made no response.
The call that wakes the leap of human mind,
Its chequered eager motion of pursuit,
Its fluttering-hued illusion of desire,
Visited her heart like a sweet alien note.
Time's message of brief light was not for her.

SAVITRI

In her there was the anguish of the gods
Imprisoned in our transient human mould,
The deathless conquered by the death of things.
A vaster Nature's joy had once been hers,
But long could keep not its gold heavenly hue
Or stand upon this brittle earthly base.
A narrow movement on Time's deep abysm,
Life's fragile littleness denied the power,
The proud and conscious wideness and the bliss
She had brought with her into the human form,
The calm delight that weds one soul to all,
The key to the flaming doors of ecstasy.
Earth's grain that needs the sap of pleasure and tears
Rejected the undying rapture's boon:
Offered to the daughter of infinity
Her passion-flower of love and doom she gave.
In vain now seemed the splendid sacrifice.
A prodigal of her rich divinity,
Her self and all she was she had lent to men,
Hoping her greater being to implant
That heaven might native grow in mortal soil.
Hard is it to persuade earth-nature's change ;
Mortality bears ill the eternal's touch:
It fears the pure divine intolerance
Of its assault of ether and of fire ;
It murmurs at its sorrowless happiness,
Almost with hate repels the light it brings ;
It trembles at its naked power of Truth
And the might and sweetness of its absolute Voice.
Inflicting on the heights the abysmal's law,
It sullies with its mire heaven's messengers:
Its thorns of fallen nature are the defence
It turns against the saviour hands of grace ;

It meets the sons of God with death and pain.
 A glory of lightnings traversing the earth-scene,
 Their sun-thoughts fading darkened by ignorant minds,
 Their work betrayed, their good to evil turned,
 The cross their payment for the crown they gave,
 Only they leave behind a splendid Name.
 A fire has come and touched men's hearts and gone ;
 A few have caught flame and risen to greater life.
 Too unlike the world she came to help and save,
 Her greatness weighed upon its ignorant breast,
 And from its deep chasms welled a dire return,
 A portion of its sorrow, struggle, fall.
 To live with grief, to confront death on her road,—
 The mortal's lot became the Immortal's share.
 Thus trapped in the gin of earthly destinies,
 Awaiting her ordeal's hour abode,
 Outcast from her inborn felicity,
 Accepting life's obscure terrestrial robe,
 Hiding herself even from those she loved,
 The godhead greater by a human fate.
 A dark foreknowledge separated her
 From all of whom she was the star and stay ;
 Too great to impart the peril and the pain,
 In her torn depths she kept the grief to come.
 As one who watching over men left blind
 Takes up the load of an unwitting race,
 Harboured a foe whom with her heart she must feed,
 Unknown her act, unknown the doom she faced,
 Unhelped she must foresee and dread and dare.
 The long-foreknown and fatal morn was here
 Bringing a noon that seemed like every noon.
 For Nature walks upon her mighty way
 Unheeding when she breaks a soul, a life ;
 Leaving her slain behind she travels on:

SAVITRI

Man only marks and God's all-seeing eyes.
Even in this moment of her soul's despair,
In its grim rendezvous with death and fear,
No cry broke from her lips, no call for aid ;
She told the secret of her woe to none :
Calm was her face and courage kept her mute.
Yet only her outward self suffered and strove ;
Even her humanity was half divine :
Her spirit was opened to the Spirit in all,
Her nature felt all Nature as its own.
Apart, living within, all lives she bore ;
Aloof, she carried in herself the world :
Her dread was one with the great cosmic dread,
Her strength was founded on the cosmic might ;
The universal Mother's love was hers.
Against the evil at life's afflicted roots,
Her own calamity its private sign,
She made of her pangs a mystic poignant sword.
A solitary mind, a world-wide heart,
To the lone Immortal's unshared work she rose.
At first life grieved not in her burdened breast :
On the lap of earth's original somnolence
Inert, released into forgetfulness
Prone it reposed, unconscious on mind's verge,
Obtuse and tranquil like the stone and star.
In a deep cleft of silence twixt two realms
She lay remote from grief, unsawn by care,
Nothing recalling of the sorrow here.
Then a slow faint remembrance shadowlike moved,
And sighing she laid her hand upon her bosom
And recognised the close and lingering ache,
Deep, quiet, old, made natural to its place,
But knew not why 'twas there nor whence it came.
The Power that kindles mind was still withdrawn.

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Heavy, unwilling were life's servitors
Like workers with no wages of delight ;
Sullen, the torch of sense refused to burn ;
The unassisted brain found not its past.
Only a vague earth-nature held the frame.
But now she stirred, her life shared the cosmic load.
At the summons of her body's voiceless call
Her strong far-winged spirit travelled back,
Back to the yoke of ignorance and fate,
Back to the labour and stress of mortal days,
Lighting a pathway through strange symbol dreams
Across the ebbing of the seas of sleep.
Her house of Nature felt an unseen sway,
Illumined swiftly were life's darkened rooms,
And memory's casements opened on the hours
And the tired feet of thought approached her doors.
All came back to her. Earth and Love and Doom,
The ancient disputants, encircled her
Like giant figures wrestling in the night:
The godheads from the dim Inconscient born
Awoke to struggle and the pang divine,
And in the shadow of her flaming heart,
At the sombre centre of the dire debate,
A guardian of the unconsolated abyss
Inheriting the long agony of the globe,
A stone-still figure of high and godlike Pain
Stared into space with fixed regardless eyes
That saw grief's timeless depths but not life's goal.
Afflicted by his harsh divinity,
Bound to his throne, he waited unappeased
The daily oblation of her unwept tears.
All the fierce question of man's hours relived.
The sacrifice of suffering and desire
Earth offers to the immortal Ecstasy

SAVITRI

Began again beneath the eternal Hand.
Awake she endured the moments' serried march
And looked on this green smiling dangerous world,
And heard the ignorant cry of living things.
Amid the trivial sounds, the unchanging scene
Her soul arose confronting Time and Fate.
Immobile in herself, she gathered force.
This was the day when Satyavan must die.

END OF CANTO I

Mystic Poetry*

I

This is the real stumbling-block of mystic poetry and specially mystic poetry of this kind. The mystic feels real and present, even ever present to his experience, intimate to his being, truths which to the ordinary reader are intellectual abstractions or metaphysical speculations. He is writing of experiences that are foreign to the ordinary mentality. Either they are unintelligible to it and in meeting them it flounders about as in an obscure abyss or it takes them as poetic fancies expressed in intellectually devised images. He uses words and images in order to convey to the mind some perception, some figure of that which is beyond thought. To the mystic there is no such thing as an abstraction. Everything which to the intellectual mind is abstract, has a concreteness, substantiality which is more real than the sensible form of an object or of a physical event. To him, consciousness is the very stuff of existence and he can feel it everywhere enveloping and penetrating the stone as much as man or the animal. A movement, a flow of consciousness is not to him an image but a fact. What is to be done under these circumstances? The mystical poet can only describe what he has felt, seen in himself or others or in the world just as he has felt or seen it or experienced through exact vision, close contact or identity and leave it to the general reader to understand or not understand or misunderstand according to his capacity. A new kind of poetry demands a new mentality in the recipient as well as in the writer.

Another question is the place of philosophy in poetry or whether it has any place at all. Some romanticists seem to believe that the poet has no right to think at all, only to see and feel. I hold that philosophy has its place and can even take a leading place along with psychological experience as it does in the Gita. All depends on how it is done, whether it is a dry or a living philosophy, an arid intellectual statement or the expression not only of the living truth of thought but of something of its beauty, its light or its power.

The theory which discourages the poet from thinking or at least from thinking for the sake of the thought proceeds from an extreme romanticist temper, it reaches its acme on one side in the question

* Letters in reply to questions from a disciple.

of the surrealist, "Why do you want poetry to mean anything?" and on the other in Housman's exaltation of pure poetry which he describes paradoxically as a sort of sublime nonsense which does not appeal at all to the mental intelligence but knocks at the solar plexus and awakes a vital and physical rather than intellectual sensation and response. It is of course not that really but a vividness of imagination and feeling which disregards the mind's positive view of things and its logical sequences; the centre or centres it knocks at are not the brain-mind, not even the poetic intelligence but the subtle physical, the nervous, the vital or the psychic centre. The poem he quotes from Blake is certainly not nonsense, but it has no positive and exact meaning for the intellect or the surface mind; it expresses certain things that are true and real, not nonsense but a deeper sense which we feel powerfully with a great stirring of some inner emotion, but any attempt at exact intellectual statement of them sterilises their sense and spoils their appeal. This is not the method of the highest spiritual poetry. Its expression aims at a certain force, directness and spiritual clarity and reality. When it is not understood, it is because the truths it expresses are unfamiliar to the ordinary mind or belong to an untrodden domain or domains or enter into a field of occult experience; it is not because there is any attempt at a dark or vague profundity or at an escape from thought. The thinking is not intellectual but intuitive or more than intuitive, always expressing a vision, a spiritual contact or a knowledge which has come by entering into the thing itself, by identity.

It may be noted that the greater romantic poets did not shun thought; they thought abundantly, almost endlessly. They have their characteristic view of life, something that one might call their philosophy, their world-view, and they express it. Keats was the most romantic of poets, but he could write "To philosophise I dare not yet"; he did not write "I am too much of a poet to philosophise." To philosophise he regarded evidently as mounting on the admiral's flag-ship and flying an almost royal banner. Spiritual philosophic poetry is different; it expresses or tries to express a total and many-sided vision and experience of all the planes of being and their action upon each other. Whatever language, whatever terms are necessary to convey this truth of vision and experience it uses without scruple or admitting any mental rule of what is or is not poetic. It does not hesitate to employ terms which might be considered as technical when these can be turned to express something direct, vivid and powerful. That need not be an introduction of technical jargon, that is to say, I suppose, special and artificial language, expressing in this case only abstract ideas and generalities without any living truth or reality in

them. Such jargon cannot make good literature, much less good poetry. But there is a 'poeticism' which establishes a sanitary cordon against words and ideas which it considers as prosaic but which properly used can strengthen poetry and extend its range. That limitation I do not admit as legitimate.

I am justifying a poet's right to think as well as to see and feel, his right to "dare to philosophise". I agree with the modernists in their revolt against the romanticist's insistence on emotionalism and his objection to thinking and philosophical reflection in poetry. But the modernist went too far in his revolt. In trying to avoid what I may call poeticism he ceased to be poetic, wishing to escape from rhetorical writing, rhetorical pretension to greatness and beauty of style, he threw out true poetic greatness and beauty, turned from a deliberately poetic style to a colloquial tone and even to very flat writing; especially he turned away from poetic rhythm to a prose or half-prose rhythm or to no rhythm at all. Also he has weighed too much on thought and has lost the habit of intuitive sight; by turning emotion out of its intimate chamber in the house of Poetry, he has had to bring in to relieve the dryness of much of his thought, too much exaggeration of the lower vital and sensational reactions untransformed or else transformed only by exaggeration. Nevertheless he has perhaps restored to the poet the freedom to think as well as to adopt a certain straightforwardness and directness of style.

Now I come to the law prohibiting repetition. This rule aims at a certain kind of intellectual elegance which comes into poetry when the poetic intelligence and the call for a refined and classical taste begin to predominate. It regards poetry as a cultured entertainment and amusement of the highly civilised mind; it interests by a faultless art of words, a constant and ingenious invention, a sustained novelty of ideas, incidents, word and phrase. An unfailing variety or the outward appearance of it is one of the elegances of this art. But all poetry is not of this kind; its rule does not apply to poets like Homer or Valmiki or other early writers. The Veda might almost be described as a mass of repetitions; so might the work of Vaishnava poets and the poetic literature of devotion generally in India. Arnold has noted this distinction when speaking of Homer; he mentioned especially that there is nothing objectionable in the close repetition of the same word in the Homeric way of writing. In many things Homer seems to make a point of repeating himself. He has stock descriptions, epithets always reiterated, lines even which are constantly repeated again and again when the same incident returns in his narrative, e.g., the line

Doupēsen de pesōm arabēse de teuch' ep' autō

MYSTIC POETRY

"Down with a thud he fell and his armour clangoured upon him". He does not hesitate also to repeat the bulk of a line with a variation at the end, e.g.

Bē de kat' oulompōio karēnōn chōōmenos kēr
And again the

Bē de kat' oulompōio karēnōn āixāsa

"Down from the peaks of Olympus he came wrath vexing his heart-strings" and again, "Down from the peaks of Olympus she came impetuously darting." He begins another line elsewhere with the same word and a similar action and with the same nature of a human movement physical and psychological in a scene of Nature, here a man's silent sorrow listening to the roar of the ocean:

Be d' akeōn para thīna poluphlois boio thalassēs

"Silent he walked by the shore of the many-rumoured ocean".

In mystic poetry also repetition is not objectionable; it is resorted to by many poets, sometimes with insistence. I may note as an example the constant repetition of the word *Ritam*, truth, sometimes eight or nine times in a short poem of nine or ten stanzas and often in the same line. This does not weaken the poem, it gives it a singular power and beauty. The repetition of the same key ideas, key images and symbols, key words or phrases, key epithets, sometimes key lines or half lines is a constant feature. They give an atmosphere, a significant structure, a sort of psychological frame, an architecture. The object here is not to amuse or entertain but the self-expression of an inner truth, a seeing of things and ideas not familiar to the common mind, a bringing out of inner experience. It is the true more than the new that the poet is after. He uses *āvṛtti*, repetition, as one of the most powerful means of carrying home what has been thought or seen and fixing it in the mind in an atmosphere of light and beauty. Moreover, the object is not only to present a secret truth in its true form and true vision but to drive it home by the finding of the true word, the true phrase, the *mot juste*, the true image or symbol, if possible the inevitable word; if that is there, nothing else, repetition included, matters much. This is natural when the repetition is intended, serves a purpose; but it can hold even when the repetition is not deliberate but comes in naturally in the stream of the inspiration. I see, therefore, no objection to the recurrence of the same or similar image such as sea and ocean, sky and heaven in a lone long passage

MYSTIC POETRY

provided each is the right thing and rightly worded in its place. The same rule applies to words, epithets, ideas. It is only if the repetition is clumsy or awkward, too burdensomely insistent, at once unneeded and inexpressive or amounts to a disagreeable and meaningless echo that it must be rejected.

II

What you have written as the general theory of the matter seems to be correct and it does not differ substantially from what I wrote. But your phrase about unpurposive repetition might carry a suggestion which I would not be able to accept; it might seem to indicate that the poet must have a "purpose" in whatever he writes and must be able to give a logical account of it to the critical intellect. That is surely not the way in which the poet or at least the mystic poet has to do his work. He does not himself deliberately choose or arrange word and rhythm but only sees it as it comes in the very act of inspiration. If there is any purpose of any kind, it also comes by and in the process of inspiration. He can criticise himself and the work; he can see whether it was a wrong or an inferior movement, he does not set about correcting it by any intellectual method but waits for the true thing to come in its place. He cannot always account to the logical intellect for what he has done; he feels or intuits, and the reader or critic has to do the same.

* * *

Obviously, the Overmind and aesthetics cannot be equated together. Aesthetics is concerned mainly with beauty, but more generally with *rasa*, the response of the mind, the vital feeling and the sense to a certain "taste" in things which often may be but is not necessarily a spiritual feeling. Aesthetics belong to the mental range and all that depends upon it; it may degenerate into aestheticism or may exaggerate or narrow itself into some version of the theory of "Art for Art's sake". The Overmind is essentially a spiritual power. Mind in it surpasses its ordinary self and rises and takes its stand on a spiritual foundation. It embraces beauty and sublimates it; it has an essential aesthesis which is not limited by rules and canons; it sees a universal and an eternal beauty while it takes up and transforms all that is limited and particular. It is besides concerned with things other than beauty or aesthetics. It is concerned especially with truth and knowledge or rather with a wisdom that exceeds what we call

knowledge; its truth goes beyond truth of fact and truth of even the higher thought which is the first spiritual range of the thinker. It has the truth of spiritual thought, spiritual truth, spiritual sense and at its highest the truth that comes by the intimate spiritual touch or by identity. Ultimately, truth and fact come together and coincide, but in between there is a distance. The Overmind in all its dealings puts truth first; it brings out the truth (and truths) in things and also its infinite possibilities; it brings out even the truth that lies behind falsehood and error; it brings out the truth of the Inconscient and the truth of the Superconscious and all that lies in between. When it speaks through poetry, this is its first essential quality; a limited aesthetical artistic aim is its purpose. It can take up and uplift any or every style or at least give some stamp of itself upon it. More or less all that we call Overhead poetry has something of this character whether it comes from the Overmind or simply intuitive, illumined or strengthened by the strength of the higher revealing Thought; even when it is intrinsically Overhead poetry, still some touch can come in. Overhead poetry itself does not always deal in what is new or original or strange; it can take up the obvious, the common, the bare and the bald, the old, even that which without it would seem so hackneyed and raise it to greatness. Take the lines:

*I spoke as one who ne'er would speak again
And as a dying man to dying men.*

The writer is not a poet, not even a conspicuously talented poet. The statement of the thought is bare and direct and the rhetorical device used is of the simplest, but the Overhead touch comes in through a passionate emotion and sincerity and is unmistakable. In all poetry a poetical aesthesis of some kind there must be between the writer and the recipient; but aesthetics is of many kinds. The ordinary kind is not sufficient for appreciating the Overhead poetry in poetry. A fundamental and universal aesthesis is needed, something also more intense that listens, sees and feels from deep within and answers to what is far behind the surface. A greater, wider, deeper aesthesis then which can answer even to the transcendent, can feel too whatever of the transcendent or spiritual enters into the things of life, mind and sense.

The business of the critical intellect is to appreciate and judge and here too it must judge; but it can judge and appreciate here only if it first learns to see and sense inwardly and inwardly. But it is dangerous for it to lay down its own laws or even to

rules which it thinks it can deduce from some observed practice of the Overhead inspiration and use that to wall in the inspiration; for it runs the risk of seeing the Overhead inspiration step across its wall and pass on leaving it bewildered and at a loss. The mere critical intellect not touched by a rarer sight can do little here. We can take an extreme case, for in extreme cases certain incompatibilities come out more clearly. What might be called the Johnsonian critical method has obviously little or no place in this field,—the method which expects a precise logical order in thoughts and language and pecks at all that departs from a matter-of-fact or a strict and rational ideative coherence or a sober and restrained classical taste. Johnson himself is plainly out of his element when he deals crudely with one of Gray's delicate trifles and tramples and flounders about in the poet's basin of goldfish breaking it with his heavy and vicious kicks. But also this method is useless in dealing with any kind of romantic poetry. What would the Johnsonian critic say to Shakespeare's famous lines

*Or take up arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them . . .*

He would say, "What a mixture of metaphors and jumble of ideas! Only a lunatic could take up arms against a sea! A sea of troubles is a too fanciful metaphor and, in any case, one can't end the sea by opposing it, it is more likely to end you." Shakespeare knew very well what he was doing; he saw the mixture as well as any critic could and he accepted it because it brought home, with an inspired force which a neater language could not have had, the exact feeling and idea that he wanted to bring out. Still more scared would the Johnsonian be by any occult or mystic poetry. The Veda, for instance, uses with what seems like a deliberate recklessness the mixture, at least, the association of disparate images, of things not associated together in the material world which in Shakespeare is only an occasional departure. What would the Johnsonian make of this *Rik* in the Veda: "That splendour of thee, O Fire, which is in heaven and in the earth and in the plants and in the waters and by which thou hast spread out the wide mid-air, is a vivid ocean of light which sees with a divine seeing"? He would say, "What is this nonsense? How can there be a splendour of light in plants and in water and how can an ocean of light see divinely or otherwise? Anyhow, what meaning can there be in all this, it is a senseless mystical jargon." But, apart from these extremes, the mere critical intellect is likely to feel a distaste or an incomprehension with mystical poetry

even if that poetry is quite coherent in its ideas and well-a in its language. It will be bound to stumble over all sorts that are contrary to its reason and offensive to its taste, associated contraries, excess or abruptness or crowding of images, dis intellectual limitations in the thought, concretisation of ab the treating of things and forces as if there were a conscious personality in them and a hundred other aberrations from the intellectual line. It is not likely either to tolerate depart technique which disregard the canons of an established. Fortunately here the modernists with all their errors have b bounds and the mystic poet may be more free to invent technique.

III

Something more might need to be said in regard to the note in poetry and the overmind aesthesis; but these are ex subjects on which it is difficult to write with any precision the intellect's demand for clear and positive statement.

I do not know that it is possible for me to say why I re line or passage as having the overhead touch or the overh while another misses it. When I said that in the lines about man the touch came in through some intense passion and in the writer, I was simply mentioning the psychological door which the thing came. I did not mean to suggest that suc and sincerity could of itself bring in the touch or that they co the overhead note in the lines. I am afraid I have to say wha said about the grand style; it has to be felt and cannot be o or accounted for. One has an intuitive feeling, a recognition thing familiar to one's experience or one's deeper perceptio substance and the rhythm or in one or the other which ring cannot be gainsaid. One might put forward a theory or a de of what the Overhead character of the line consists in, doubtful whether these could be always applicable. You s instance, of the sense of the Infinite and the One which is in the Overhead planes; that need not be explicitly ther overhead poetic expression or in the substance of any given can be expressed indeed by overhead poetry as no other ca it, but this poetry can deal with quite other things. I would say that Shakespeare's lines

Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain

have the overhead touch in the substance, the rhythm and the feeling; but Shakespeare is not giving us here the sense of the One and the Infinite. He is as in the other lines of his which have this note, dealing as he always does with life, with vital emotions and reactions or the thoughts that spring out in the life-mind under the pressure of life. It is not any strict adhesion to a transcendental view of things that constitutes this kind of poetry, but something behind not belonging to the mind or the vital and physical consciousness and with that a certain quality or power in the language and the rhythm which helps to bring out that deeper something. If I had to select the line in European poetry which most suggests an almost direct descent from the overmind consciousness there might come first Virgil's line about "the touch of tears in mortal things":

Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.

Another might be Shakespeare's

In the dark backward and abysm of Time

or again Milton's

Those thoughts that wander through eternity.

We might also add Wordsworth's line

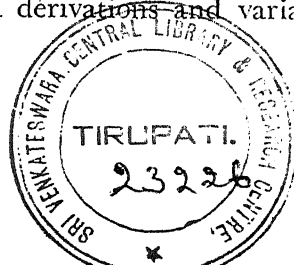
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep.

There are others less ideative and more emotional or simply descriptive which might be added, such as Marlowe's

Is this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilion?

If we could extract and describe the quality and the subtle something that mark the language and rhythm and feeling of these lines and underlie their substance we might attain hazardously to some mental understanding of the nature of overhead poetry.

The Overmind is not strictly a transcendental consciousness, that epithet would more accurately apply to the supramental and to the Sachchidananda consciousness—though it looks up to the transcendental and may receive something from it and though it does transcend the ordinary human consciousness and in its full and native self-power, when it does not lean down and become part of mind, is superconscient to us. It is more properly a cosmic consciousness, even the very base of the cosmic as we perceive, understand or feel it. It stands behind every particular in the cosmos and is the source of all our mental, vital or physical actualities and possibilities which are diminished and degraded derivations and variations from



it and have not, except in certain formations and activities of genius and some intense self-exceeding, anything of the native overmind quality and power. Nevertheless, because it stands behind as if covered by a veil, something of it can break through or shine through or even only dimly glimmer through and that brings the overmind touch or note. We cannot get this touch frequently unless we have torn the veil, made a gap in it or rent it largely away and seen the very face of what is beyond, lived in the light of it or established some kind of constant intercourse. Or we can draw upon it from time to time without ever ascending into it if we have established a line of communication between the higher and the ordinary consciousness. What comes down may be very much diminished but it has something of that. The ordinary reader of poetry who has not that experience will usually not be able to distinguish but would at the most feel that here is something extraordinarily fine, profound, sublime or unusual, —or he might turn away from it as something too high pitched and excessive; he might even speak depreciatingly of “purple passages”, rhetoric, exaggeration or excess. One who had the line of communication open, could on the other hand feel what is there and distinguish even if he could not adequately characterise or describe it. The essential character is perhaps that there is something behind of which I have already spoken and which comes not primarily from the mind or the vital emotion or the physical seeing but from the cosmic self and its consciousness standing behind them all and things then tend to be seen not as the mind or heart or body sees them but as this greater consciousness feels or sees or answers to them. In the direct overmind transmission this something behind is usually forced to the front or close to the front by a combination of words which carries the suggestion of a deeper meaning or by the force of an image or, most of all, by an intonation and a rhythm which carry up the depths in their wide wash or long march or mounting surge. Sometimes it is left lurking behind and only suggested so that a subtle feeling of what is not actually expressed is needed if the reader is not to miss it. This is oftenest the case when there is just a touch or note pressed upon something that would be otherwise only of a mental, vital or physical poetic value and nothing of the body of the overhead power shows itself through the veil, but at most a tremor and vibration, a gleam or a glimpse. In the lines I have chosen there is always an unusual quality in the rhythm, as prominently in Virgil’s line, often in the very building and constantly in the intonation and the association of the sounds which meet in the line and find themselves linked together by a sort of inevitable felicity. There is also an inspired

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selection or an unusual bringing together of words which has the power to force a deeper sense on the mind as in Virgil's

Sunt lacrimae rerum

One can note that this line if translated straight into English would sound awkward and clumsy as would many of the finest lines in Rig Veda; that is precisely because they are new and felicitous turns in the original language, discoveries of an unexpected and absolute phrase; they defy translation. If you note the combination of words and sounds in Shakespeare's line

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
so arranged as to force on the mind and still more on the subtle nerves
and sense the utter absoluteness of the difficulty and pain of living
for the soul that has awakened to the misery of the world, you can
see how this technique works. Here and elsewhere the very body
and soul of the thing seen or felt come out into the open. The same
dominant characteristic can be found in other lines which I have not
cited,—in Leopardi's

Insano indegno mistero delle cose

“The insane and ignoble mystery of things”

or in Wordsworth's

Voyaging through strange seas of thought alone.

Milton's line lives by its choice of the word "wander" to collocate with "through eternity"; if he had chosen any other word, it would no longer have been an overhead line, even if the surface sense had been exactly the same. On the other hand, take Shelley's stanza—

We look before and after
And pine for what is not ;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught ;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of
 saddest thought.

This is perfect poetry with the most exquisite melody and beauty of wording and an unsurpassable piognancy of pathos, but there is no touch or note of the overhead inspiration: it is the mind and the heart, the vital emotion, working at their highest pitch under the stress of a psychic inspiration. The rhythm is of the same character, a direct, straightforward, lucid and lucent movement welling out

limpidly straight from the psychic source. The same characteristics are found in another short lyric of Shelley's which is perhaps the purest example of the psychic inspiration in English poetry:

I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the heavens reject not,—

The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.

We have again extreme poetic beauty there, but nothing of the overhead note.

In the other lines I have cited it is really the overmind language and rhythm that have been to some extent transmitted; but of course all overhead poetry is not from the Overmind, more often it comes from the higher thought, the illumined mind or the pure intuition. This last is different from the mental intuition which is frequent enough in poetry from the mental level. The language and rhythm from these other overhead levels can be very different from that which is proper to the Overmind; for the Overmind thinks in a mass; its thought, feeling, vision is high or deep or wide or all these things together: to use the Vedic expression about fire, the divine messenger, it goes vast on its way to bring the divine riches, and it has a corresponding language and rhythm. The higher thought has a strong tread often with bare unsandaled feet and moves in a clear-cut light: a divine power, measure, dignity is its most frequent character. The outflow of the illumined mind comes in a flow brilliant with revealing words or a light of crowding images, sometimes surcharged with its burden of revelations, sometimes with a luminous sweep. The intuition is usually a lightning flash showing up a single spot or plot of ground or scene with an entire and miraculous completeness of vision to the surprised ecstasy of the inner eye; its rhythm has a decisive inevitable sound which leaves nothing essential unheard, but very commonly is embodied in a single stroke. These however are only general or dominant characters; any number of variations is possible. There are besides mingled inspirations, several levels meeting and combining or modifying each other's notes, and an overmind transmission can contain or bring with it all the rest, but how much

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of this description will be to the ordinary reader of poetry at all intelligible or clearly identifiable?

There are besides in mental poetry derivations or substitutes for all these styles. Milton's "grand style" is such a substitute for the manner of the Higher Thought. Take it anywhere at its ordinary level or in its higher elevation, there is always or almost always that echo there:

Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree

or

On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues

or

Blind Thamyras and blind Maeonides
And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old.

Shakespeare's poetry coruscates with a play of the hues of imagination which we may regard as a mental substitute for the inspiration of the illumined mind and sometimes by aiming at an exalted note he links on to the illumined overhead inspiration itself as in the lines I have more than once quoted:

Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the shipboy's eyes and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge?

But the rest of that passage falls away in spite of its high-pitched language and resonant rhythm far below the overhead strain. So it is easy for the mind to mistake and take the higher for the lower inspiration or *vice versa*. Thus Milton's lines might at first sight be taken because of a certain depth of emotion in their large lingering rhythm as having the overhead complexion, but this rhythm loses something of its sovereign right because there are no depths of sense behind it. It conveys nothing but the noble and dignified pathos, of the blindness and old age of a great personality fallen into evil days. Milton's architecture of thought and verse is high and powerful and massive, but there are usually no subtle echoes there, no deep chambers: the occult things in man's being are foreign to his intelligence,—for it is in the light of the poetic intelligence that he works. He does not stray into "the mystic cavern of the heart", does not follow the inner fire entering like a thief with the Cow of Light into the secrecy of secrecies. Shakespeare does sometimes get in as if by a splendid

psychic accident in spite of his preoccupation with the colours and shows of life.

I do not know therefore whether I can speak with any certainty about the lines you quote; I would perhaps have to read them in their context first, but it seems to me that there is just a touch, as in the lines about the dying man. The thing that is described there may have happened often enough in times like those of the recent wars and upheavals and in times of violent strife and persecution and catastrophe, but the greatness of the experience does not come out or not wholly, because men feel with the mind and heart and not with the soul; but here there is by some accident of wording and rhythm a suggestion of something behind, of the greatness of the soul's experience and its courageous acceptance of the tragic, the final, the fatal—and its resistance; it is only just a suggestion, but it is enough: the Overhead has touched and passed back to its heights. There is something very different but of the same essential calibre in the line you quote—

Sad eyes waiting for feet that never come.

It is still more difficult to say anything very tangible about the Overmind aesthesis. When I wrote about it I was thinking of the static aesthesis that perceives and receives rather than of the dynamic aesthesis which creates; I was not thinking at all of superior or inferior grades of poetic greatness or beauty. If the complete Overmind power or even that of the lower Overhead plane could come down into the mind and entirely transform its action, then no doubt there might be greater poetry written than any that man has yet achieved. Just as a greater superhuman life might be created if the supermind could come down wholly into life and lift life wholly into itself and transform it. But what happens at present is that something comes down and accepts to work under the law of the mind and with a mixture of the mind and it must be judged by the laws and standards of the mind. It brings in new tones, new colours, new elements, but it does not change radically as yet the stuff of the consciousness with which we labour. Whether it produces great poetry or not depends on the extent to which it manifests its power and over-rides rather than serves the mentality which it is helping. At present it does not do that sufficiently to raise the work to the full greatness of the worker.

And then what do you mean exactly by greatness in poetry? One can say that Virgil is greater than Catallus and that many of Virgil's lines are greater than anything Catallus ever achieved. But poetical perfection is not the same thing as poetical greatness. Virgil is perfect at his best, but Catallus too is perfect at his best: even, each has a

certain exquisiteness of perfection, each in his own kind. Virgil's kind is large and deep, that of Catallus sweet and intense. Virgil's art reached or had from its beginning a greater and more constant ripeness than that of Catallus. We can say then that Virgil was a greater poet and artist of word and rhythm but we cannot say that his poetry, at his best, was more perfect poetry and that of Catallus less perfect. That renders futile many of the attempts at comparison like Arnold's comparison of Wordsworth's skylark with Shelley. You may say that Milton was a greater poet than Blake, but there can always be people, not aesthetically insensitive, who would prefer Blake's lyrical work to Milton's grander achievement, and there are certainly things in Blake which touch deeper chords than the massive hand of Milton could ever reach. So all poetic superiority is not summed up in the word greatness. Each kind has his own best which escapes from comparison and stands apart in its own value.

Let us then leave for the present the question of poetic greatness or superiority aside and come back to the Overmind aesthesis. By aesthesis is meant a reaction of the consciousness mental and vital and even bodily which receives a certain element in things, something that can be called their taste, *rasa*, which passing through the mind or sense or both awakes a vital enjoyment of the taste, *bhoga*, and this can again awaken us, awaken even the soul in us to something yet deeper and more fundamental than mere pleasure and enjoyment, to some form of the spirit's delight of existence, Ananda. Poetry, like all art, serves the seeking for these things, this aesthesis, this Rasa, Bhoga, Ananda; it brings us a Rasa of word and sound but also of the idea and, through the idea, of the things expressed by the word and sound and thought, a mental or vital or sometimes the spiritual image of their form, quality, impact upon us or even, if the poet is strong enough, of their world-essence, their cosmic reality, the very soul of them, the spirit that resides in them as it resides in all things. Poetry may do more than this, but this at least it must do to however small an extent or it is not poetry. Aesthesis therefore is of the very essence of poetry, as it is of all art. But it is not the sole element and aesthesis too is not confined to a reception of poetry and art; it extends to everything in the world: there is nothing we can sense, think or in any way experience to which there cannot be an aesthetic reaction of our conscious being. Ordinarily, we suppose that aesthesis is concerned with beauty, and that indeed is its most prominent concern: but it is concerned with many other things also. It is the universal Ananda that is the parent of aesthesis and the universal Ananda takes three major and original forms, beauty, love and delight, the delight of all existence, the delight in things, in all things. Universal Ananda

is the artist and creator of the universe witnessing, experiencing and taking joy in its creation. In the lower consciousness it creates its opposites, the sense of ugliness as well as the sense of beauty, hate and repulsion and dislike as well as love and attraction and liking, grief and pain as well as joy and delight ; and between these dualities or as a grey tint in the background there is a general tone of neutrality and indifference born from the universal insensibility into which the Ananda sinks in its dark negation in the Inconscient. All this is the sphere of aesthesis, its dullest reaction is indifference, its highest is ecstasy. Ecstasy is a sign of a return towards the original or supreme Ananda: that art or poetry is supreme which can bring us something of the supreme tone of ecstasy. For as the consciousness sinks from the supreme levels through various degrees towards the Inconscience the general sign of this descent is an always diminishing power of its intensity, intensity of being, intensity of consciousness, intensity of force, intensity of the delight in things and the delight of existence. So too as we ascend towards the supreme level these intensities increase. As we climb beyond Mind, higher and wider values replace the values of our limited mind, life and bodily consciousness. Aesthesis shares in this intensification of capacity. The capacity for pleasure and pain, for liking and disliking is comparatively poor on the level of our mind and life; our capacity for ecstasy is brief and limited; these tones arise from a general ground of neutrality which is always dragging them back towards itself. As it enters the overhead planes the ordinary aesthesis turns into a pure delight and becomes capable of a high, a large or a deep abiding ecstasy. The ground is no longer a general neutrality, but a pure spiritual ease and happiness upon which the special tones of the aesthetic consciousness come out or from which they arise. This is the first fundamental change.

Another change in this transition is a turn towards universality in place of the isolations, the conflicting generalities, the mutually opposing dualities of the lower consciousness. In the Overmind we have a first firm foundation of the experience of a universal beauty, a universal love, a universal delight. These things can come on the mental and vital plane even before those planes are directly touched or influenced by the spiritual consciousness; but they are there a temporary experience and not permanent or they are limited in their field and do not touch the whole being. They are a glimpse and not a change of vision or a change of nature. The artist for instance can look at things only plain or shabby or ugly or even repulsive to the ordinary sense and see in them and bring out of them beauty and the delight that goes with beauty. But this is a sort of special

grace for the artistic consciousness and is limited within the field of his art. In the Overhead consciousness, especially in the Overmind, these things become more and more the law of the vision and the law of the nature. Wherever the overmind spiritual man turns he sees a universal beauty touching and uplifting all things, expressing itself through them, moulding them into a field or objects of its divine aesthesis; a universal love goes out from him to all beings; he feels the Bliss which has created the worlds and upholds them and all that is expresses to him the universal delight, is made of it, is a manifestation of it and moulded into its image. This universal aesthesis of beauty and delight does not ignore or fail to understand the differences and oppositions, the gradations, the harmony and disharmony obvious to the ordinary consciousness: but, first of all, it draws a *rasa* from them and with that comes the enjoyment, *bhoga*, and the touch or the mass of the *Ananda*. It sees that all things have their meaning, their value, their deeper or total significance which the mind does not see, for the mind is only concerned with a surface vision, surface contacts and its own surface reactions. When something expresses perfectly what it was meant to express, the completeness brings with it a sense of harmony, a sense of artistic perfection; it gives even to what is discordant a place in a system of cosmic concordances and the discords become part of a vast harmony, and wherever there is harmony, there is a sense of beauty. Even in form itself, apart from the significance, the Overmind consciousness sees with a totality which changes its effect on the percipient even while it remains the same thing. It sees lines and masses and an underlying design which the physical eye does not see and which escapes even the keenest mental vision. Every form becomes beautiful to it in a deeper and larger sense of beauty than that commonly known to us. The Overmind looks also straight at and into the soul of each thing and not only at its form or its significance to the mind or to the life; this brings to it not only the true truth of the thing but the delight of it. It sees also the one spirit in all, the face of the Divine everywhere and there can be no greater *Ananda* than that; it feels oneness with all, sympathy, love, the bliss of the Brahman. In a highest, a most integral experience it sees all things as if made of existence, consciousness, power, bliss, every atom of them charged with and constituted of *Sachchidananda*. In all this the overmind aesthesis takes its share and gives its response; for these things come not merely as an idea in the mind or a truth-seeing but as an experience of the whole being and a total response is not only possible but above a certain level imperative.

I have said that aesthesis responds not only to what we call beauty

and beautiful things but to all things. We make a distinction between truth and beauty; but there can be an aesthetic response to truth also, a joy in its beauty, a love created by its charm, a rapture in the finding, a passion in the embrace, an aesthetic joy in its expression, a satisfaction of love in the giving of it to others. Truth is not merely a dry statement of facts or ideas to or by the intellect; it can be a splendid discovery, a rapturous revelation, a thing of beauty that is a joy for ever. The poet also can be a seeker and lover of truth as well as a seeker and lover of beauty. He can feel a poetic and aesthetic joy in the expression of the true as well as in the expression of the beautiful. He does not make a mere intellectual or philosophical statement of the truth; it is his vision of its beauty, its power, his thrilled reception of it, his joy in it that he tries to convey by an utmost perfection in word and rhythm. If he has the passion, then even a philosophical statement of it he can surcharge with this sense of power, force, light, beauty. On certain levels of the Overmind, where the mind element predominates over the element of gnosis, the distinction between truth and beauty is still valid. It is indeed one of the chief functions of the Overmind to separate the main powers of the consciousness and give to each its full separate development and satisfaction, bring out its utmost potency and meaning, its own soul and significant body and take it on its own way as far as it can go. It can take up each power of man and give it its full potentiality, its highest characteristic development. It can give to intellect its austere intellectuality and to logic its most sheer unsparing logicity. It can give to beauty its most splendid passion of luminous form and the consciousness that receives it a supreme height and depth of ecstasy. It can create a sheer and pure poetry impossible for the intellect to sound to its depths or wholly grasp much less to mentalise and analyse. It is the function of Overmind to give to every possibility its full potential, its own separate kingdom. But also there is another action of Overmind which sees and thinks and creates in masses, which reunites separated things, which reconciles opposites. On that level truth and beauty not only become constant companions but become one, involved in each other, inseparable: on that level the true is always beautiful and the beautiful is always true. Their highest fusion perhaps only takes place in the Supermind; but Overmind on its summits draws enough of the supramental light to see what the Supermind sees and do what the Supermind does though in a lower key and with a less absolute truth and power. On an inferior level Overmind may use the language of the intellect to convey as far as that language can do it its own greater meaning and message but on

its summits Overmind uses its own native language and gives to its truths their own supreme utterance and no intellectual speech, no mentalised poetry can equal or even come near to that power and beauty. Here your intellectual dictum that poetry lives by its aesthetic quality alone and has no need of truth or that truth must depend upon aesthetics to become poetic at all, has no longer any meaning. For there truth itself is highest poetry and has only to appear to be utterly beautiful to the vision, the hearing, the sensibility of the soul. There dwells and from there springs the mystery of the inevitable word, the supreme immortal rhythm, the absolute significance and the absolute utterance.

I hope you do not feel crushed under this avalanche of metaphysical psychology; you have called it upon yourself by your questioning about the Overmind's greater, larger and deeper aesthesis. What I have written is indeed very scanty and sketchy, only some of the few essential things that have to be said; but without it I could not try to give you any glimpse of the meaning of my phrase. This greater aesthesis is inseparable from the greater truth, it is deeper because of the depth of that truth, larger by all its immense largeness. I do not expect the reader of poetry to come anywhere near to all that, he could not without being a Yogi or at least a sadhak: but just as the overhead poetry brings some touch of a deeper power of vision and creation into the mind without belonging itself wholly to the higher reaches, so also the full appreciation of all its burden needs at least some touch of a deeper response of the mind and some touch of a deeper aesthesis. Until that becomes general the Overhead or at least the Overmind is not going to do more than to touch here and there as it did in the past, a few lines, a few passages, or perhaps as things advance, a little more, nor is it likely to pour into our utterance its own complete power and absolute value.

I have said that overhead poetry is not necessarily greater or more perfect than any other kind of poetry. But perhaps a subtle qualification may be made to this statement. It is true that each kind of poetical writing can reach a highest or perfect perfection in its own line and in its own quality and what can be more perfect than a perfect perfection or can we say that one kind of absolute perfection is "greater" than another kind? What can be more absolute than the absolute? But then what do we mean by the perfection of poetry? There is the perfection of the language and there is the perfection of the word-music and the rhythm, beauty of speech and beauty of sound, but there is also the quality of the thing said which counts for something. If we consider only word and sound and what in themselves they evoke, we arrive at the application of the theory of

art for art's sake to poetry. On that ground we might say that a lyric of Anacreon is as good poetry and as perfect poetry as anything in Aeschylus or Sophocles or Homer. The question of the elevation or depth or intrinsic beauty of the thing said cannot then enter into our consideration of poetry; and yet it does enter, with most of us at any rate, and is part of the aesthetic reaction even in the most "aesthetic" of critics and readers. From this point of view the elevation from which the inspiration comes may after all matter, provided the one who receives it is a fit and powerful instrument; for a great poet will do more with a lower level of the origin of inspiration than a smaller poet can do even when helped from the highest sources. In a certain sense all genius comes from Overhead; for genius is the entry or inrush of a greater consciousness into the mind or a possession of the mind by a greater power. Every operation of genius has at its back or infused within it an intuition, a revelation, an inspiration, an illumination or at the least a hint or touch or influx from some greater power or level of conscious being than those which men ordinarily possess or use. But this power has two ways of acting: in one it touches the ordinary modes of mind and deepens, heightens, intensifies or exquisitely refines their action but without changing its modes or transforming its normal character; in the other it brings down into these normal modes something of itself, something supernormal, something which one at once feels to be extraordinary and suggestive of a superhuman level. These two ways of action when working in poetry may produce things equally exquisite and beautiful, but the word "greater" may perhaps be applied, with the necessary qualifications, to the second way and its too rare poetic creation.

The great bulk of the highest poetry belongs to the first of these two orders. In the second order there are again two or perhaps three levels; sometimes a felicitous turn or an unusual force of language or a deeper note of feeling brings in the overhead touch. More often it is the power of the rhythm that lifts up language that is simple and common or a feeling or idea that has often been expressed and awake something which is not ordinarily there. If one listens with the mind only or from the vital centre only, one may have a wondering admiration for the skill and beauty of woven word and sound or be struck by the happy way or the power with which the feeling or idea is expressed. But there is something more in it than that; it is this that a deeper, more inward strand of the consciousness has seen and is speaking, and if we listen more profoundly we can get something more than the admiration and delight of the mind or Housman's thrill of the solar plexus. We can feel perhaps the

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Spirit of the universe lending its own depth to our mortal speech
or listening from behind to some expression of itself, listening
perhaps to its memories of

Old unhappy far-off things
And battles long ago

or feeling and hearing it may be said the vast oceanic stillness and
the cry of the cuckoo

Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides

or it may enter again into Vyasa's "A void and dreadful forest ringing
with the crickets' cry"

Vanam pratibhayam śūnyam jhillikagaṇanāditam

or remember its call to the soul of man

Anityam asukham lokam imam prāpya bhajasva mām

"Thou who hast come to this transient and unhappy world, love and worship Me." There is a second level on which the poetry draws into itself a fuller language of intuitive inspiration, illumination or the higher thinking and feeling. A very rich or great poetry may then emerge and many of the most powerful passages in Shakespeare, Virgil or Lucretius or the Mahabharata and Ramayana, not to speak of the Gita, the Upanishads or the Rig Veda have this inspiration. It is a poetry "thick inlaid with patines of bright gold" or welling up in a stream of passion, beauty and force. But sometimes there comes down a supreme voice, the overmind voice and the overmind music and it is to be observed that the lines and passages where that happens rank among the greatest and most admired in all poetic literature. It would be therefore too much to say that the overhead inspiration cannot bring in a greatness into poetry which could surpass the other levels of inspiration, greater even from the purely aesthetic point of view and certainly greater in the power of its substance.

A conscious attempt to write overhead poetry with a mind aware of the planes from which this inspiration comes and seeking always to ascend to those levels or bring down something from them, would probably result in a partial success; at its lowest it might attain to what I have called the first order, ordinarily it would achieve the

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two lower levels of the second order and in its supreme moment might in lines and in sustained passages achieve the supremest something of the highest summit of its potency. But its work will be to express adequately and constantly what is not occasionally and inadequately some kind of utterance of the above, the things beyond, the things behind the apparent world, its external or superficial happenings and phenomena. It would only bring in the occult in its larger and deeper ranges but touch of the spiritual heights, the spiritual depths, the spiritual infinities and vastnesses as also the truths of the inner mind, the inner life, an inner or subtle physical beauty and reality. It would bring out the concreteness, the authentic image, the inmost soul of things and the heart of meaning of these things, so that it could never fail in beauty. If this could be achieved by one possessed, if not the supreme still of a sufficiently high and wide poetic genius, something new could be added to the domain of poetry and there would be no danger of the power of poetry beginning to fade, to fall into decadence, to fail us. It might even enter into the domain of the infinite and inexhaustible, catch some word of the Ineffable, give us revealing images which bring us near to the Reality that is in us and in all of which the Upanishad speaks,

Anejad ekam manaso javīyo nainad devā āpnuvan
arshat

Tad ejati tan najati tad dūre tad u antike

“The One unmoving is swifter than thought, the gods cannot overtake It, for It travels ever in front; It moves and It moves. It is far away from us and It is very close.”

The gods of the Overhead planes can do much to bridge the distance and to bring out that closeness, even if they cannot altogether overtake the Reality that exceeds and transcends them.

Sri Aurobindo

SECTION II



Consciousness as Energy

BY NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

A live wire—through which an electric current, say of several thousand volts, is passing—looks quite innocent, motionless, inactive, almost inert. The appearance, needless to say, is deceptive. Even so the *still life* of a Yogi. Action does not consist merely in mechanical motion visible to the eye: intra-atomic movements that are subtle, invisible, hard to detect even by the most sensitive instruments, possess a tremendous potency, even to unimaginable degrees. Likewise in man, the extent of muscular flexions does not give the measure or potential of his activity. One cannot say that the first line infantryman who rushes and charges, shoots, bayonets, kills and is killed is more active and dynamic than the general who sits quiet behind in a cabin and merely sends out orders. Vivekananda wandered about the whole of India, crossed the seas, traversed continents, undertook whirlwind campaigns—talking, debating, lecturing: it was a life superbly rich in muscular movements. By his side, Ramakrishna would appear quite tame—inactive, “introvert”: fewer physical displacements or muscular exercises marked his life. And yet, ask anyone who is in touch with the inner life of these great souls, he will tell you, Vivekananda is only a spark from the mighty and concentrated Energy that Ramakrishna was.

What is this spiritual or Yogic Energy? Ordinary people, people with a modern mind would concede at the most that there are two kinds of activity: (1) real activity—physical action, work, labour with muscle and nerve, and (2) passive activity, activity of mind and thought. According to the pragmatic standard especial, if not entire, importance is given to the first category; the other category, “sicklied o’er with a pale cast of thought”, is held at a discount. The *thoughtful* people are philosophers at the most, they are ineffectual angels in this workaday world of ours. We need upon earth people of a sterner stuff, dynamic people who are not thought-bound, but know how to apply and execute their ideas, whatever that may be. Lenin was great, not because he had revolutionary ideas, but because he gave a muscular frame to them. Such people alone are the pragmatic, dynamic, useful category of humanity. The others are, according to the more radical leftist view, merely parasitic, and, according to a more generous liberal

view, chiefly decorative elements in human society. Mind-energy can draw dream pictures, beautiful perhaps, but inane; it is only muscular energy that gives a living and material body—a local habitation and name—to what otherwise would be airy nothing.

Energy, however, is not merely either muscular (physical) or cerebral. There are energies subtler than thought and yet more dynamic than the muscle (or the electric pile). One such, for example, is vital energy, although orthodox bio-chemists do not believe in any kind of vitalism that is something more than mere physico-chemical reaction. Indeed this is the energy that counts in life; for it is this that brings about what we call success in the world. A man with push and go, as it is termed, is nothing but a person with abundant vital energy. But even of this energy there are gradations. It can be deep, controlled, organised or it can be hectic, effusive, confused: the latter kind expresses and spends itself often in mere external, nervous and muscular movements. Those, however, who are known as great men of action are precisely they who are endowed with life energy of the first kind.

The Yogi—the Hatha Yogi, the Raja Yogi, the Tantrik—seeks consciously to master this life energy, to possess and use it as he wills. The Yogi, the true Yogi aims at a higher quality, a deeper potentiality of the life energy: it may be called the Inner Life Energy. This inner life energy is in a line with, is one with the universal life energy; therefore it is said when one possesses and controls this power one has command over the universal power. All other energies, visible, tangible, concretised and canalised are particular formations and embodiments of this mother energy. Even the most physical and material energies—mechanical, electrical, nervous, etc.—are all derivatives and lesser potentials of this fount and origin. The mastery of the inner vital energy is the whole secret of what is known as occultism, even magic, black or white, spell and other allied powers or miracles. The eight *siddhis* well-known to the Yogis are the natural results of this mastery. With such a mastery the Yogi controls and guides his own destiny; he can also in the same way control and guide the destiny of others, even of peoples and humanity at large. That is the deeper meaning the great phrase of the Gita—*lokasangraha*—carries. Indeed, great souls are precisely they who move with the upward current of Nature, in and through whom Nature works out vast changes, prepares the steps of evolution in the world and humanity.

But what again is this universal vital energy? This also is an instrument, not the ultimate agent. After all, vital energy is blind by itself; it moves instinctively or intuitively, as Bergson would say, it

does not know consciously beforehand the next step it is going to take. Consciousness then is the secret. This is "the power behind the throne", it is this to which the Upanishad refers in its analysis of the ultimate dynamics of things as the life of Life, *Prāṇasya prāṇah*.

It is the aim of all Yoga—spiritual discipline,—finally to arrive at this consciousness, this supreme reality which is behind all existence, which is the source and the substance of all. It is in this Consciousness that the whole creation is rolled up and it is from this that it is rolled out. Only there are some paths of spiritual discipline that prefer and follow the movement of in-rolling and others that seek the one of out-rolling: the former is the path of *nivritti*, the latter that of *pravritti*.

Thus consciousness is not merely a status of being, but also a force of becoming. All that is to take form and be active, whether in the grossest, the material mode or in the most subtle, the ideative mode is originally a seed, a stress, a point of concentration of this consciousness. The Yogi becomes potentially all-powerful, because he is one with the All-Power, the Mother Consciousness. The perfect spiritual man not merely dwells with or close to the Divine (*sālokya*), he is not merely made in the image of the Divine (*sārūpya*) and again he is not merely unified and one with the Divine (*sāyujya*), but what is most marvellous, he has the same nature, that is to say, he has the same powers and capacities as the Divine (*sādharmya*).

The dynamic becoming, becoming a power and personality of the omnipotent Divine is a secret well-known to the Yogis and mystics. Only it has not been worked out in all its implications, not given the full value and importance rightfully due to it. The reason is that although the principle was discovered and admitted the proper key had not been found, that could release and manipulate the Energy at its highest potential and largest amplitude. Because the major tendency in the spiritual man till now has been rather to follow the path of *nivritti* than the path of *pravritti*, this latter path being more or less identified with the path of Ignorance. But there is a higher line of *pravritti* which means the manifestation of the Divine, not merely the expression of the inferior Nature.

(2)

The force of consciousness is not simply the force an idea or thought may have. The distinction between the two is not usually understood. In reality, however, thought or idea is a form of energy-action in the mind and mind is only one field or grade—not the most

dynamic nor direct or immediate—among many for the pure consciousness, as I have already said. Mind energy, Life energy, physical or material energy are various forms and stages in the evolution of consciousness-energy (Chit-Tapas). The nature and function of consciousness-energy we may elucidate and understand in a new way, by following a different line of its *modus vivendi*.

Consciousness has a fourfold potential. The first is the outer consciousness, which is predominantly mental; it is the sphere of perceiving movements of which man is usually and habitually aware. It is what the Upanishad names *jāgrat* or *jāgaritasthāna* and characterised as *bahihprajna*: it is the waking state and has cognition of external things. In other words, the consciousness here is objectivised, externalised—"extravert": it is also a strongly dualised formation, the consciousness is hedged in, isolated and surrounded by a protective ring, as it were, of a characteristically separate personality; it is a surface formation, a web made out of day sensations and thoughts, perceptions and memories, impressions and associations. It is a system of outward actions and reactions as it is in the midst of one's actual environment. The second potential is that of the Inner Consciousness: its characteristic is that the consciousness here is no longer trenchantly separative and individual, narrowly and rigidly egoistic. It feels and sees itself as part of the whole with the world consciousness. It looks upon its individuality as a wave of the universal movement. It is also sometimes called the subliminal consciousness; for it plays below or behind the surface range of consciousness. It is made up of the residuary portions of the normal consciousness, the abiding vibrations and stresses that settle down and remain in the background and are not immediately required or utilised for life purposes: also it contacts directly external forces and movements that well out of the universal life. The phenomena of clairvoyance and clairaudience, the knowledge of the past and future and of other worlds and persons and beings, certain dynamic movements such as distant influence and guidance and controlling without any external means, well-known in all occult disciplines, are various manifestations of the power of this Inner Consciousness. But there is not only an outward and an inner consciousness; there is also a deeper or nether consciousness. This is the great field that has been and is being explored by modern psychologists. It is called the subconscious, sometimes also the unconscious, but really it should be named the inconscient, for it is not altogether devoid of consciousness, but is conscious in its own way. The outer consciousness is involved or lost within itself or lies buried; it comprises those movements and impulsions, inclinations and

tions that have no rational basis, on the contrary, have an irrational basis; they are not acquired or developed by the individual in its normal course of life experience, they are ingrained, lie imbedded in man's nature and are native to his original biological and physical make-up. As the human embryo recapitulates in the womb the whole history of man's animal evolution, even so the normal man, even the most civilised and apparently the farthest from his ancient moorings and sources, enshrines in his cells, in a miraculously living manner, the memory of vast geological epochs, the great struggles and convulsions through which earth and its inhabitants have passed, the basic urges of the crude life force, its hopes, fears, desires, hungers that constitute the rudimental and aboriginal consciousness, the atavism that links the man of today not only to his primitive ancestry, but even to the plant world—even perhaps to the mineral world—out of which his body cells have issued and evolved. Legends and fairy tales, mythologies and fables are a rationalised pattern and picture of the vibrations and urges that moved the original consciousness. It was a collective—a racial—and an aboriginal consciousness. The same lies *chromosomic*, one can almost say, in the constitution of the individual man of today. This region of the unconscious (or the inconscient) is a veritable field of force: it lies at the root of all surface dynamisms. The surface consciousness, *jāgrat*, is a very small portion of the whole, it is only the tip of the pyramid or an iceberg, the major portion lies submerged beyond our normal view. In reflex movements, in sudden unthinking outbursts in dreams and daydreams, this undercurrent is silhouetted and made visible and recognisable. Even otherwise they exercise a profound influence upon all our conscious movements. This underground consciousness is the repository of the most dark and unenlightened elements that grew and flourished in the slime of man's original habitat. They are small, ugly, violent, anti-social, chaotic forces, their names are cruelty, lust, hunger, blind selfishness. Nowhere else than in this domain can the great Upanishadic truth find its fullest application—Hunger that is Death.

But this is the seamy side of Nature, there is also a sunny side. If there is a nadir, there must be a corresponding zenith. In the Vedic image, if man is born of the Dark Mother, he is also a child of the White Mother (*krishnā* and *swetī*). Or again, if earth is our mother, the Heaven is our father—*dyaaur me pitā mātā prithivīriyam*. In other words, consciousness extends not in depth alone, but in height also—it is vertically extended, infinite both ways. As there is a subconsciousness, or unconsciousness so also there is at the other end superconsciousness.

Now this superconsciousness is the true origin of creation,

although the apparent and objective creation starts with and is based upon Unconsciousness. All norms and archetypes belong to the superconsciousness; for the sake of material creation they are thrown down or cast as seed into the Unconscious and in this process they undergo a change, a deformation and aberration. All the major themes of dream myths and prehistoric legends which the psychologists claim to have found imbedded in man's subconscient consciousness are in fact echoes and mirages of great spiritual—superconscient—realities reflected here below. The theme of the Hero, of the Dual Mother (Dark and Fair), of Creation and Sacrifice—these are, according to Jung,—dramatisations of some fundamental movements and urges in the dark subconscient nature. Jung however throws a luminous suggestion in characterising the nature of this vast complex. The general sense, Jung says, is that of a movement forward, of a difficult journey, of a pull backward and downward, of yawning abysses that call, of a light that beckons. It is an effort, a travail of what lies imbedded and suppressed to come out into the open, into the normal consciousness and thus release an unhealthy tension, restore a balance in the individual's system. Modern psychology lays great stress upon the integration of personality. Most of the ills that human nature suffers from, they say, are due to this division or schism in it, a suppressed subconscient and an expressed conscient seeking to express a negation of that subconscient. Modern psychology teaches that one should dive into the nether regions and face squarely whatever elements are there, help these to follow their natural bent to come up and see the light of the day. Only thus there can be established a unitary movement, an even consistency and an equilibrium throughout the entire consciousness and being.

So far so good. But two things are to be taken note of. First of all, the resolution of the normal conflict in man's consciousness, the integration of his personality is not wholly practicable within the scope of the present nature and the field of the actual forces at play. That can give only a shadow of the true resolution and integration. A conscious envisaging of the conflicting forces, a calm survey of the submerged or side-tracked "*libidos*" in their true nature, a voluntary acceptance of these dark elements as a part of normal human nature, does not automatically make for their sublimation and purification or transformation. The thing is possible only through another force and on another level, by the intervention and interfusion precisely of the superconsciousness. And here comes the second point to note. For it is this superconsciousness towards which all the strife and struggle of the under-consciousness are turned and directed. The yearning and urge in the subconscient to move forward, to escape

outside into the light does not refer merely to the march towards normal awareness and consciousness: it has a deeper direction and a higher aim—it seeks that of which it is an aberration and a deformation, the very origin and source, the height from which it fell.

This superconsciousness has a special mode of its quintessential energy which is omnipotent in action, immediate in effectivity. It is pure as the purest incandescent solar light and embodies the concentrated force of consciousness. It is the original creative vibration of the absolute or supreme Being. Sri Aurobindo calls this supreme form of superconscient consciousness-energy the Supermind. There are of course other layers and strata of superconsciousness leading up to the supermind which are of various potentials and embody different degrees of spiritual power and consciousness.

We have spoken of the Inner Consciousness. But there is also, we must now point out, an Inmost Consciousness. As the Superconsciousness is a consciousness-energy in height, the Inmost Consciousness is a consciousness-energy in depth, the deepest depth, beyond or behind the Inner Consciousness. If we wish to put it geometrically we can say, the vertical section of consciousness represents the line from the superconsciousness to the subconscious or *vice versa*; the horizontal section represents the normal waking state of consciousness; and there is a transverse section leading from the surface first to the Inner and finally to the Inmost. This inmost consciousness—the consciousness most profound and secreted in the cave of the heart, *guhāhitam gahbhareshtham*, is the consciousness of the soul, the Psychic Being, as Sri Aurobindo calls it: it is the immortal in the mortal. It is, as has often been described, the nucleus round which is crystallised and organised the triple nature of man consisting of his mind and life and body, the centre of dynamic energy that secretly vivifies them, gradually purifies and transforms them into higher functions and embodiments of consciousness. As a matter of fact, it is this inmost consciousness that serves as the link, at least as the most powerful link, between the higher and lower forms of consciousness, between the Superconscient and the Subconscient or Inconscient. It takes up within itself all the elements of consciousness that the past in its evolutionary career from the very lowest and basic levels has acquired and elaborated, and by its inherent pressure and secret gestation delivers what was crude and base and unformed as the purest luminous noble substance of the perfectly organised superconscient reality. Indeed that is the mystic alchemy which the philosophers experimented in in the Middle Ages. In this context, the Inner Consciousness, we may note, serves as a medium through which the action of the Inmost (as well as that of the Uppermost) takes place.

We can picture the whole phenomenon in another way and say in the devotional language of the Mystics that the Inmost Consciousness is the Divine Child, the Superconscious is the Divine Father and the Inferior Consciousness is the Great Mother (*Magna Mater*): the Inner and the Outer Consciousness are the field of play and the instrument of action as well of this Divine Trinity.

Man we thus see is an infinitely composite being. We have referred to the four or five major chords in him, but each one has again innumerable gradations of vibration. Man is a bundle or dynamo of energy and this energy is nothing but the force of consciousness. To different modes or potentials of this energy different names are given. And what makes the thing still more complex is that all these elements exist simultaneously and act simultaneously, although in various degrees and stresses. They act upon each other, and severally and collectively impress upon the nature and character of the individual being and mould and direct his physical status and pragmatic life. A man can however take consciously a definite position and status, identify himself with a particular form and force of consciousness and build his being and life in the truth and rhythm of that consciousness. Naturally the limits and the limitation of that consciousness mark also the limits and limitation of the disposition he can effect in his life. When it is said that the spiritual force is not effective on the physical plane in mundane affairs—Buddha, it is said for example, has not been able to rid the earth of age, disease and death (although it was not Buddha's intention to do so, his purpose was to show a way of escape, of bypassing the ills of life, and in that he wholly succeeded)—it only means that the right mode or potential of spiritual energy has not been found; for that matter even the mightiest mundane forces are not sovereignly effective in mundane affairs, otherwise the Nazi-Force would have been ruling the world today.

Still it must be remembered that all these apparently diverse layers and degrees of being or consciousness or energy form essentially one indivisible unity and identity. What is called the highest and what is called the lowest are not in reality absolutely disparate and incommensurable entities: everywhere it is the highest that lies secreted and reigns supreme. The lowest is the highest itself seen from the reverse side, as it were: the norms and typical truths that obtain in the superconsciousness are also the very guiding formulas and principles in the secret heart of the Inconscience too, only they appear externally as deformations and caricatures of their true reality. But even here we can tap and release the full force of a superconscious energy. A particle of dead matter, we know today, is a mass of stilled

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energy, electrical and radiant in nature; even so an apparently inconscient entity is a packet of Superconsciousness in its highest potential of energy. The secret of releasing this atomic energy of the Spirit is found in the Science of Yoga.

Spiritual Basis of World Order

BY ANILBARAN ROY

I

Spiritual Revival

Orthodox and organised religion is on the decline everywhere in the world to-day; this is so more markedly in the West than in the East, but the tendency is unmistakable, and the modern mind has so far been moulded entirely by Western thought. Though there are many men who still cling to the old religions with their creeds and dogmas, since the humanist movement of the eighteenth century the impression has been gaining ground that religion cannot cure the evils from which humanity is suffering. All advanced countries have separated religion from politics, and have made it a thing of personal concern which should not be allowed to interfere with public affairs. And Bolshevik Russia has set up a living example how far a people can advance in social and political life without any aid from religion, and even going definitely against religion. But now it is being realised that even if religion has failed, no better success has attended the social, economic, political and other humanist efforts. There is a plethora of secular ideals and "isms" in the world, but the terrible catastrophe that has overtaken mankind in spite of, or rather on account of, these is inevitably turning man's mind again to the ancient remedy of religion and spirituality. Mr. Henry Wallace, Vice-President of the United States, speaking at the conference on Christian basis of World Order, described good-neighbourly policy as a Christian policy and democracy as the only true expression of Christianity. He further said, "Only through religion and education can the freedom-loving individual realise that the greatest pleasure comes from serving the highest unity and general welfare of all."

But as a matter of fact, the practice of Christianity for about two thousand years has not made the nations of the West good neighbours.

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In spite of its high ideals of unity and brotherhood, and the help and consolation it might have brought to individuals, religion has hitherto failed to bring about any radical change in the ways of humanity, and that is why the attempt to create interest in religion anew is not meeting with much success anywhere. In Britain, for example, detailed church counts, observations, interviews and written questionnaires show that numerically there is a tendency (accelerated by the war) for less and less people to attend regularly at "orthodox" places of worship. But interest in spiritual *ideas* has increased. Many people feel ideological starvation, but find no satisfactory solution in the existing get-up. Professor C. E. M. Joad, a British thinker and writer of great influence, surveyed the whole situation in two articles contributed to the *New Statesman and Nation*. As the problem is not confined to Britain, but concerns the whole of humanity, we shall briefly discuss it in all its bearings and consider the alternatives that have been suggested by Professor Joad himself.

In the first place, Professor Joad has shown that the organised church has ceased to be a living spiritual force. He had a discussion with a representative group of church leaders. The theme of the discussion was the bearing upon religion of our present distress, and conversely the ability of religion to contribute to their relief. "I do not remember", says Mr. Joad, "to have talked with a more bewildered group of men The contemporary situation in regard to religion is intriguing. Beneath the crust of surface indifference an undirected spiritual ferment is at work." He has attempted to give an analysis of this situation. With the progress of Science, the faith in human progress became strong in the 19th century. "That belief", says Mr. Joad, "founded upon the discovery of man's ascent through evolution, and confirmed by the power which Science has won for him, was accepted almost universally in the world in which I grew up. Shaken by the last war and the slump, it has, I think, in many minds received its quietus from the outbreak of the second European War within twenty-five years." People are now reminded of the collapse of ancient civilizations and do not find any reason why the present civilization should not plunge into a cataclysm, showing that there is something radically wrong and evil in human nature for which there is no cure. During the preceding period of optimism, evil was regarded as a bye-product of circumstances—of economic circumstances and psychological. "The economic circumstance was poverty. Poverty not only starved a man's body and stunted his mind; it narrowed and darkened his spirit, focussing his attention upon problems of conflict and survival, making him mean and grasping and cruel, and sealing his spiritual sense against whatever was lovely and gracious. The

inference was obvious: remove the cause, for example, by Socialism, and you removed the evil that sprung from it. The psychological circumstance was disclosed by psycho-analysis. The complexes were formed in the early years of childhood, the loves and hates generated, which in later years expressed themselves in the inferiority and the guilt, and also in the envy, the malice and the sadism, by which as adults we were all too frequently animated. The inference was the same—remove the cause, for example, by the psycho-analysing of parents, nurses and teachers, and you averted the evil sprung from it."

Eminent thinkers and scientists, like Einstein, held this view of the perfectability of man with strong conviction. But the recent war brought a painful disillusionment; the diabolical manner in which a whole nation, under Nazi leadership, proceeded to render the greater part of humanity into their beasts of burden, makes it hard to keep one's faith in human nature. Hitler openly boasted that he would exterminate all the Jews in Europe, and his orders in this respect were actually executed with German thoroughness. That makes Mark Twain's words aptly applicable to him, "Blood is my natural drink and the wail of dying men is music to my ears." The phenomenon of Nazism cannot certainly be explained as the result of unwise psychological training and economic injustice. There must be something radically wrong in human nature which under suitable conditions can turn men into not mere brutes but devils and demons. That seems to support the Christian doctrine of original sin, of the conception of man as a creature whose heart is desperately wicked.

It is one step from this to the Christian belief in Divine Grace. To hold that evil is imprinted in human nature, and that no human effort can eradicate it is an almost intolerable position. So man turns to religion which assures one that if, believing, one prays, then help will be forthcoming; that grace, in fact, will be vouchsafed. This is Mr. Joad's reading of the situation; and he also notices another factor. "Between thirty and forty years ago, a revolution took place in physics, as the result of which the nineteenth century conception of a cosmos, which, consisting only of material particles in motion, nevertheless afforded a sufficient explanation of all the phenomena, bodily, mental and spiritual of existence, has been discarded. It takes about forty years for a revolution in scientific thinking to percolate into the popular consciousness, the common-sense view of the world usually being a petrified version of the Science of half a century ago. The intellectuals are reached in about thirty years. There is then today a wise and increasing recognition among intelligent young people that matter is not the only form of reality, and that the categories of existence are not exhausted by what we see and touch and hear and smell. There

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may, then, be immaterial realities, there may even be spiritual ones. Science still forms the climate of opinion of the age, but the climate is changing. This does not, of course, mean that Science has shown religion to be true. It has merely removed the reasons which it was formerly thought to have afforded for deducing that religion must be false."

Thus the stage is cleared for the entry of religion. The spiritual ferment is unmistakable. Mr. Joad proceeds to consider into what channels the accumulating waters of spiritual revival are likely to pour.

II

Prospect of Religion

There seems to be a general agreement that the accumulating waters of spiritual frustration are not likely to flow into the channels of the organised churches. People have a new hunger for spirituality, are feeling an increasing urge towards it, but cannot find satisfaction in the creeds and dogmas and ceremonies of orthodox religion. So they are turning to what Mr. Joad calls "the hundred and one substitute religions of our time. Theosophy and Christian Science and Spiritualism and Rosicrucianism and now astrology, come forward to usurp the place which religion proper has ceded. But these are no more than aspirins for the sick headache of humanity—they can neither cure it nor remove the cause". Deprived of God, men dress up a man as a God substitute; Lenin worship became a new religion in atheistic Soviet Russia. "Hitler is lonely, so is God; Hitler is like God"—so ran one of the articles of the new German creed. Unless the frustration of the religious sense is removed, other countries also may fall an easy prey to some form of Fascism. Can the churches do this? Mr. Joad says that they will fade altogether from the national life, and become wholly what many are in large part already, empty shells, unless they develop on one or other of two lines. The first line of development, indicated by the Malvern Conference, entails a vigorous move to the left. Let not clergymen concern themselves with matters of ritual and ceremony which bore the common man; let them not insist on matters of doctrine, but lay stress, not so much on a set of propositions which believers must accept as articles of faith, as upon a code of conduct which all decent men must observe. Let them not teach dogmas about the geography of the universe and the history of man, which Science has shown to be untrue, and which therefore arouses his contempt.

But as a matter of fact, for many years now, the churches have been developing more or less on this line; they have been growing broader, looser, and less exclusive. There has been less insistence on the supernatural implications, the other-worldly affirmations of Christianity. "Doctrinally Christianity has become little more than the highest common factor of what most decent men believe; practically, it has done little more than codify the standards by which most men seek to regulate their conduct." And what has been the result? The raising up of a pagan generation in a pagan world. So Mr. Joad concludes that if religion is ever again to matter, it must tell 'modern thought' to go to the devil, and stress the other-worldly connection since its authority derives from another world. The alternative line of development is, then, of a Christianity which "will refuse to concern itself, except incidentally, with the affairs of this world, justifying its refusal on the grounds that this world is not the real world and this life not man's true life. This world is too bad to be real, this life too bad to be true. We do wrong, then, to expect very much of either of them, the most and the best we can do here is to prepare ourselves by discipline, faith and prayer for a better life in an eternal world hereafter."

It is remarkable that after the triumphant progress in Science, foremost Western thinkers like Mr. Joad should be thus compelled to take the position of the Indian ascetic who denies life, and whose attitude has so long been condemned as "escapism" by the Western people. But Mr. Joad has the courage of his conviction and proceeds to assert that whether it be "escapism" or true Christianity, this strain in the Christian religion has always come to the front in times of the breaking of civilisations and he thinks there are symptoms of its recrudescence today. Among other instances, he refers to the new revival of mysticism, sponsored by Messrs. Huxley and Heard. But, as we shall see later, Huxley and Heard are not escapists in the sense in which Mr. Joad understands the term; and we venture to say that, whatever the indications in isolated instances, the West, and for that matter, the modern world will not find spiritual satisfaction or fulfilment in escapism. What is demanded is a reconciliation, a synthesis of religion and life, and all the symptoms are pointing in that direction. But the difficulties in bringing about such a reconciliation are stupendous, and they must be faced squarely if there is to be a satisfactory issue.

The Malvern Conference in Great Britain was such an attempt. It did not really want to deprive religion of its creeds and dogmas, but wanted to interpret them in such a manner as to lay down the spiritual basis of a socialist order. The popularity of this standpoint

was proved by the fact that the two pamphlets containing *The Malvern Findings* have had a joint circulation of over a million. The Archbishop's Penguin Special *Christianity and the Social Order* has had an immense sale. He has declared in his Gifford lectures that Christianity is the most materialist of all the great world religions, by which he meant that it is concerned with man's well-being in his life on earth. One correspondent criticising Mr. Joad's view remarks:

"The point that I want to emphasize is that these Socialists and near Socialists are Socialists because of their religion, because far, as Professor Joad supposes, from being bored by ritual and ceremony they value and understand their mystical value and significance and since they are religious, they cherish doctrine and dogma, for religion without dogma is a banal burlesque . . . For the anti-Christian mysticism of Aldous Huxley I have no sort of interest. To me it is a bad form of that bad thing, other-worldliness."¹

Still the Malvern Findings have left many things unfound. In the first place, Socialism is not regarded by all as the true expression of Christianity. As we have already mentioned, Mr. Henry Wallace, a distinguished American, regards Democracy, as distinguished from Socialism and Communism, as the only true expression of Christianity. Even Fascism and Nazism claim a spiritual, if not a Christian basis; thus Hitler declared in his *Mein Kampf* that to preach the equality of men was a crime against the Creator and that a humanity ruled by a Master Race was the true divine order. And it cannot be denied that there are many Christians who have a leaning more towards Fascism, and even Nazism than towards Socialism. The dread of Bolshevism throughout Europe became a potent instrument of propaganda in the hands of Hitler. Fascism and Democracy, between them, have more adherents in the world to-day than Socialism, and it stands to reason that all of them have some elements of truth. If spirituality is to furnish the basis of a new world order, it must be able to reconcile the conflicting claims of all these social and political creeds.

Then, no religion can do without creeds and dogmas; but modern men find sincere difficulty in accepting them. "To an enormous number of the most educated and cultured Europeans the following dogmas or beliefs (the list is by no means exhaustive) are either nonsense or so without supporting evidence as not to be worth bothering about in practice: The fall of man, virgin birth of incarnate gods, the virtue of cannibalism as a tolerable symbolism, atonement for sin by human or other animal sacrifice; resurrection of the body; the activities of angels and devils; hell and last judgment; a Deity that

¹ Sidney Dark in the *New Statesman*.

interferes personally in processes of nature; divine inspiration of any book, etc., etc.”—William Ross.

So Mr. Ross suggests that most of what passes for Christianity to-day must be scrapped. Referring to the dogmas of Christianity, he quotes the famous schoolboy's definition of Faith as “what makes folk say they believe what they know ain't so”. He lays stress on the ethics of Jesus as distinguished from Pauline Christianity, “a thing very different from anything to be discovered in the life or authentic teachings of Jesus?” But what are the authentic teachings of Jesus? Modern research has doubted whether there was any such person as Jesus at all. So far as historical evidence goes, the Christian religion may have been the construction of a few persons of great ability. Then, the ethical teaching of Christianity separated from the spiritual will have lost its sanction. “If the Church ceases to be the ‘mystical body of Christ’ it will cease to have any chance of successfully fighting the devil and all his works.”

There is again this other difficulty about religion that it is pursued by men with the same egoistic self-assertion as politics or economics. It is this vital egoism in man which is really the root of all evil, and religion, far from being able to eradicate it, has itself fallen a victim to it. Thus Mr. Ross observed: “To treat ‘Christianity’ as if it were the sole culture capable of inspiring our New World, as did the Bishop of London in a broadcast, is a fatal error; it ignores the existence of the other four civilised cultures in a small world—the Sinic, Hindic, Orthodox (Russian) and Islamic.” Mr. Ross suggests that if the ethics of Jesus are to contribute fully towards building a world civilization, they can do so only by being embodied in an acceptable world religion. But the egoism rooted in human nature stands in the way of such a consummation. “The life-individual needs place, expansion, possession of its world, dominance and control of things and beings; . . . it needs these things for itself and for those with whom it associates itself, for its own ego and for the collective ego; it needs them for its ideas, creeds, ideals, interests, imaginations: for it has to assert these forms of I-ness and my-ness and impose them on the world around it or, if it is not strong enough to do that, it has at least to defend and maintain them against others to the best of its power and contrivance. It may try to do it by methods which it thinks or chooses to think or represent as right; it may try to do it by the naked use of violence, ruse, falsehood, destructive aggression, crushing of other life formations: the principle is the same whatever the means or the moral attitude. It is not only in the realm of interests, but in the realm of ideas and the realm of religion that the vital being of man has introduced this spirit and attitude of self-affirmation and struggle and the use of violence, oppres-

sion and suppression, intolerance, aggression; it has imposed the principle of life-egoism on the domain of intellectual truth and the domain of the spirit. Into its self-affirmation the self-asserting life brings in hatred and dislike towards all that stands in the way of its expansion or hurts its ego; it develops as a means or as a passion or reaction of the life-nature cruelty, treachery and all kinds of evil: its satisfaction of desire and impulse takes no account of right and wrong but only of the fulfilment of desire and impulse. For this satisfaction it is ready to face the risk of destruction and the actuality of suffering; for what it is pushed by Nature to aim at is not self-preservation alone, but life-affirmation and life-satisfaction, formulation of life-force and life-being."²

III

Evil, its Source and Remedy

Thus we see that Fascism or Nazism against which the world was desperately fighting is not a peculiarly Italian or German evil; its roots lie in the life-nature and vital being of man, in his life need of self-assertion and self-affirmation. Also evil is not the very nature of the vital personality, "it is not primarily concerned with truth and good, but it can have the passion for joy and beauty." There is nothing wrong in seeking life-affirmation, life-delight and enrichment of our mental, vital or physical existence; Nature has evolved life out of matter as a basis for a divinised humanity on the earth. But because man "does these things as a separate ego for its separate advantage and not by conscious interchange and mutuality, not by unity, life discord, conflict, disharmony arise, and it is the products of this life-discord and disharmony that we call wrong and evil." And when this egoistic self-assertion goes to the extreme under the influence of Asuric forces, there arise diabolical phenomena like Nazism. The seed of Nazism is to be found in all peoples of the world, though the peculiar conditions of Germany, a great country in many respects, offered a rich soil for the out-flowering of this evil in our day. We saw another great people, the Japanese, also showing a dangerous leaning towards Nazi outlook and Nazi methods. These are grave warnings that unless there comes a radical cure and a radical change in human nature, there is no hope for humanity. We must not mislead ourselves by the idea that peace can be permanently secured in the world simply by disarming the aggressive Axis powers, and bringing about some external changes in the political and economic condition of mankind. All these are indis-

² *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo, Vol. II, pp. 499-500.

pensable, but they are not by themselves sufficient. To keep the aggressive powers down, the United Nations themselves must remain united; but we must admit that the prospect of that is not very bright. Already the Vice-President of the United States has given the warning that in World War III Russia may very well be the ally of Germany. As long as the ego will remain the centre of human life, there can be no real unity even between two individual beings, not to speak of fifty-one big and small nations of the world.

It has long been the endeavour of all great religions to cure the egoism of man and thus strike at the root of all evil; they have given their sanctions to social and ethical standards which habituate men to keep under control their vital impulses and egoistic desires and it is mainly due to this discipline that humanity has so far proceeded in civilization and culture. But this is only a palliative and not a radical cure. "The standards erected by ethics are uncertain as well as relative: what is forbidden by one religion or another, what is regarded as good or bad by social opinion, what is thought useful to society or noxious to it, what some temporary law of man allows or disallows, what is or is considered helpful or harmful to self or others, what accords with this or that ideal, what is prompted or discouraged by an instinct which we call conscience,—an amalgam of all these view-points is the determining heterogeneous idea, constitutes the complex substance of, morality; in all of them there is the constant mixture of truth and half-truth and error which pursues all the activities of our limiting mental Knowledge-Ignorance. A mental control over our vital and physical desires and instincts, over our personal and social action, over our dealings with others is indispensable to us as human beings, and morality creates a standard by which we can guide ourselves and establish a customary control; but the control is always imperfect and it is an expedient, not a solution; man remains always what he is and has ever been, a mixture of good and evil, sin and virtue, a mental ego with an imperfect command over his mental, vital and physical nature."³

To find a radical solution we must be able to go to the root of the problem and for that must have a true vision of the cause and origin of the malady we want to cure. The customary religious and moral standards deal with the symptoms, but deal "with them perfunctorily, not knowing what function they serve in the purpose of Nature and what it is in the mind and life that supports them and keeps them in being." It is Nature that has planted the vital impulse in man and also constructed in him an egoistic personality which is the root of all evil. Thus there is a substantial truth in the Christian

³ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, pp. 504-5.

doctrine of original sin. But what is ignored in the dogmatic belief is that Nature is evolutionary. In the material world, there is no life, no consciousness, therefore no suffering and evil. As revealed by physical science, the material universe is a reign of perfect harmony, worthy of a perfectly intelligent being, whom we call God. With the appearance of life there come the feelings of pleasure and pain, and thus good and evil, and these serve as a means of the enlargement and extension of the consciousness. But still in the animal world there is no mentally developed ego, animals are moved like machines by their life impulses and do not seek to assert or affirm themselves consciously or egoistically, thus they have no moral responsibility and no sin; that comes first in man with the development of his mental consciousness. Thus it is man who has eaten the fruit of the tree of Knowledge and has become subject to sin. But that is only a stage in his evolution. There is a secret consciousness which has been coming to the front in the long process of terrestrial evolution; that is the only rational explanation of the appearance of consciousness in matter, for what is not already involved cannot come out by evolution. Mental consciousness is the manifestation of that secret consciousness in the organised human being; and it is only an intermediate stage towards a fuller and more perfect manifestation which will be consummated by the ascent of man to a supramental level. Nature has been going through this process of evolution to create individual personality on the earth which can be the means of the expression of the individual spiritual being or the Soul or Jiva which is a portion of the Divine; Soul in Nature, that is the formula of man. When the outer instrument is perfected, there will be the realisation of divine life on the earth, a life which will have its basis in a soul consciousness, a spiritual consciousness of which the mind, life and body will be the transfigured and transformed vehicles, and that will be the realisation of the Kingdom of Heaven on the Earth of which the prophets spoke. The Soul, a spark of the Divine, has descended into the evolution to help Nature to build up an outer personality for itself, so that the infinite can express itself through the finite, God manifest Himself in man—that is the real meaning of human life and the goal of terrestrial evolution. For this, Nature had at first to build up life in matter as a basis for the divine manifestation, and also to develop separated life-forms which would be individual centres of the play of the divine consciousness. "The emergence takes place in a separated form of life which has to affirm itself against a principle of inanimate material inertia and a constant pull of that material inertia towards disintegration and a relapse into the original inanimate inconscience. This separated life-form has also to affirm itself,

supported only by a limited principle of association, against an outside world which is, if not hostile to its existence, yet full of dangers and on which it has to impose itself, conquer life-room, arrive at expression and propagation, if it wishes to survive. The result of an emergence of consciousness in these conditions is the growth of a self-affirming vital and physical individual, a construction of Nature of life and matter with a concealed psychic or spiritual true individual behind it for which Nature is creating this outward means of expression. As mentality increases, this vital and material individual takes the more developed form of a constantly self-affirming mental, vital and physical ego."⁴

Our type of existence, our natural being has developed its present character under the compulsion of these basic facts of the evolutionary emergence. Until the Soul behind our natural personality comes to the front and shapes and guides it by spiritual light and power, the vital being with its drive towards self-affirmation remains Nature's chief means of effectuation; "without its support neither mind nor body can utilise their possibilities or realise their aim here in existence". Our ego is a temporary device constructed by Nature to represent the true spiritual individual, the Soul, in our surface consciousness until that is ready for spiritualisation, and in this ego we feel ourselves separate from all other beings in the world; but the Soul is a portion of the supreme Divine, the one ultimate Reality in the world, and in its essence it is one with the Divine and all other beings. When we shall realise this our true individuality, we shall feel our essential identity with all beings, our outer personality will be a free and plastic channel of the will of the supreme Divine who is our own highest self, and our life will be an instrument for the manifestation of His Light, Power, Knowledge, Love, Ananda. That will be Immortality, the manifestation of Immortal Bliss in earthly conditions, which has been the true aspiration of all the great religions of the world.

IV

Evolutionary Crisis

In the above brief account of the origin and the remedy of wrong and evil, we have taken many things for granted; though Science has noticed an evolutionary process in the world, it can say nothing about a soul guiding that evolution or about a Divine Being of which it is a portion, missioned to fulfil His will on the earth. But, then, Science

⁴ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 483.

has not been able to explain anything; by its theory of evolution it has undermined man's belief in the dogmas of religion and has thus destroyed the sanctions of the moral standards on which human civilisation and culture depend. "Hence we find ourselves with a sanctionless morality and a senseless universe." That is the malady of the present age. Sri Aurobindo has found the solution of this baffling problem in his Yogic vision of a spiritual evolution in the world. We cannot enter here into a detailed discussion of this subject, for which we refer the reader to his great book, *The Life Divine*. We shall briefly refer here to some of its implications. The first is that it gives us a clue to the essential teaching of all the great and ancient religions of the world. We say "essential", for there are many things in all religions which are only of temporal and local value; it is only when we lay stress on this outer crust of religion that we find it coming into conflict with modern thoughts and ideals. Truth is one and unchanging; but it has many implications and cannot be grasped at once in all its integrality; then it has to be expressed through a language and thought which can be understood by the people for whom it is meant. The Biblical account of creation and of the universe suited the ideas of the time when it was preached; people would not have understood it if it had been given in the terms of the theory of Relativity or even of the Copernican theory. But though not scientifically accurate, it served to impress on the minds of the people some idea of God as the creator and ruler of the universe, and that was a true idea. The Ptolemaic theory of Astronomy has been discarded; but though not true, it was practically useful for a long time; even now it is useful for many calculations. The dogmas and creeds of religion also must be seen and evaluated in this light. What Sri Aurobindo has said about the spirit in which we should approach the Gita is applicable to all great Scriptures: "What we can do with profit is to seek in the Gita for the actual living truths it contains, apart from their metaphysical form, to extract from it what can help us or the world at large and to put it in the most natural and vital form and expression we can find that will be suitable to the mentality and helpful to the spiritual needs of our present-day humanity. No doubt in the attempt we may mix a good deal of error born of our own individuality and of the ideas in which we live, as did greater men before us, but if we steep ourselves in the spirit of this great Scripture and, above all, if we have tried to live in the spirit, we may be sure of finding in it as much real truth as we are capable of receiving as well as the spiritual influence and actual help that, personally, we were intended to derive from it. And that is after all what Scriptures were written to give; the rest is an academic disputation



or theological dogma. Only those Scriptures, religions, philosophies which can be thus constantly reshaped and developed in the inner thought and spiritual experience of a developing humanity, continue to be of living importance to mankind. The rest remain as monuments of the past, but have no actual force or vital impulse for the future." (*Essays on the Gita*, First Series.)

The central point in the Gospel of Christ is the Kingdom of God. But as the conditions actually prevailing in the world make it difficult to believe that that kingdom would ever be realised on this earth, there came the other-worldly tendency in Christianity, as in other religions, expressed in the attitude that the Kingdom of God "has no relation to existence in the world". But the discovery of the fact of an evolutionary process in Nature created new hopes, and we find many Protestants in the 19th century believing that it would be automatically realised on earth by the march of progress. That was, again, a going to the other extreme. The Kingdom will be realised on the earth, but not automatically; men will have to make conscious effort and co-operate with Nature in the evolutionary urge. The lines of that effort have been indicated in the essential teaching of all religions; the Christian teaching of love is a call to all men to rise above their narrow egoistic outlook, and feel their essential oneness with all. The egoistic consciousness of man is his fall from his true consciousness due to its involution in matter; that is the true significance of the fall of man typified in the poetic parable of the Hebrew Genesis. "That fall is his deviation from the full and pure acceptance of God and himself, or rather of God in himself, into a dividing consciousness which brings with it all the train of the dualities, life and death, good and evil, joy and pain, completeness and want, the fruit of a divided being. This is the fruit which Adam and Eve, Purusha and Prakriti, the soul tempted by Nature, have eaten. The redemption comes by the recovery of the universal in the individual and of the spiritual term in the physical consciousness. Then alone the soul in Nature can be allowed to partake of the fruit of the tree of life and be as the Divine and live for ever. For then only can the purpose of its descent into material consciousness be accomplished, when the knowledge of good and evil, joy and suffering, life and death has been accomplished through the recovery by the human soul of a higher knowledge which reconciles and identifies these opposites in the universal and transforms their divisions into the image of the divine Unity."⁵

The highest philosophical conception is that Reality is one and indivisible and that this world is a self-manifestation of that Reality.

⁵ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, pp. 77, 78.

That Reality is by its nature consciousness and bliss, and the world is manifested as a free play of that Bliss-Consciousness. If we find inconscience and suffering in the world, it can only be by a self-limitation of that infinite Conscious Being for a purpose of his own and that purpose can only be the tasting of his own delight in various forms and under ever new conditions. In the present manifestation, God has himself become matter to provide a basis for separate individual conscious beings, through whom he will have the play of mutuality and love. Matter serves as the basis for separation, and to realise unity in that separation, life and consciousness had to be manifested in material form. It is this purpose that is being served by the slow process of evolution that has been going on in terrestrial nature for millions of years. Matter, life, mind, soul, all the terms of this evolution are nothing but God himself in different aspects and statuses of his infinite being, and at the same time he is not confined to these; all the universe and all universes taken together do not constitute his whole reality; in his transcendent being he is above all this for ever. As the Lord says to Arjuna in the Gita, "Take it thus, that I am here in this world and everywhere, I support this entire universe with an infinitesimal portion of Myself" (10/41). Thus there is truth in the watch-maker theory of God being outside the world as well as in the more modern conception of God evolving in the world. The human mind may find it difficult to conceive how can God be all this, transcendent, immanent, universal, individual at the same time; but that difficulty arises because we have an anthropomorphic view of God. In truth God is an infinite consciousness and power and all these aspects are possible in the play of a spiritual consciousness.

There is a hidden Divinity in every human being, waiting to manifest itself in his outer life as soon as his outer personality will become ready for it by the natural process of evolution. That is really what is meant by saying that the Kingdom of God is within you. It was the mission of Jesus to show the way how that can be realised in the outer life of humanity; when the Catholic held that "the Kingdom of God was already realised in the Church itself", it grossly misinterpreted the great divine message. It is such misunderstanding and misapplication of the truths of religion that is the real cause of the antagonism against it. Thus writing about education in Soviet Russia, A. E. Pinkovitch remarks in an article published in the *Golden Book of Tagore*: "There are many impediments in the path of the attainment of this aim, the principal being the legacies of the old order. We are trying to sweep away the religious superstitions; and to fight the interested class within the Church who

are the pillars of exploitation and allies of the oppressors of all the wide world." That the Bolsheviks are not really against the spiritual truths of religion was proved by the enthusiastic reception they gave to Rabindranath when he visited Russia. Writing about that visit, P. S. Kogan writes from Moscow in the same book: "In every place, where he showed himself, he became the object of enthusiastic triumphs; the auditories where he spoke were overcrowded with the public and we all remember how the enormous auditorium of the Union House listened breathlessly to the great poet, reading his own poems; they listened with respect and admiration, feeling the beautiful music of the language of Bengal, though not understanding the words, but feeling themselves in the presence of a great soul." Then follow these most significant words: "A thinker reflecting on the Eternal, and a Revolution full of to-day's interest and immediate problems are not enemies. There is no rupture between them, and somewhere high up on the last summit they will hold a friendly meeting. Our revolution does not reject the hope of a 'golden age' of a future brotherhood of humanity, the idea which during many thousand years animated all religions and also the best representatives of humanity."

Thus if we go behind the outer forms and creeds of religion to the underlying spiritual truths, we shall find the basis of a truly new order in which all humanity will be united in brotherhood. The account of the terrestrial evolution we have briefly outlined above gives the clue to such truths, and can be easily accepted by the modern mind. Indeed we find religious men in the West are themselves giving such spiritual interpretation. Thus Mr. R. Woodfield of the Christ Church Vicarage writes: "The orthodox Christian religion is essentially sacramental and social in principle, it holds that the 'universal consciousness' or God, behind and in all men and all things is to find outward and visible embodiment and expression in human life on the earth and in the way in which men use the material world and its products. The particular sacrament, the Mass, obviously symbolises in dramatic action the sacramental and social conception of life." Referring to the characterisation of certain Christian dogmas by Mr. William Ross as nonsense "to an enormous number of well-educated and cultured Europeans", a correspondent remarks: "It is a pity that their education and culture has not led them to the esoteric meaning of their dogmas." He explains how the symbolism of the Eucharist influences man's unconscious mind and although he may not be able to understand it with his head, "he feels it to be true with the heart and it will colour his behaviour".

But the age of such "unconscious" influencing is gone; if man is to make further progress, he must be able to understand with his head

as well as feel with his heart, and all spiritual truths must have a philosophical expression which can be accepted by the modern intellect. If we accept the philosophy of evolution, we can see the truth that underlies the dogmas which Mr. Ross finds so distracting. We have already given the significance of the "fall of man". As regards incarnation, all human beings are in a sense incarnations of God, God has created man in his own image. Only, in ordinary human beings the Divinity remains concealed; the outer surface consciousness is still under the hold of Ignorance; to teach man how to manifest the inner Divinity in his outer consciousness, God himself incarnates in the human body, takes upon himself human limitations and human sufferings and shows by his example how they can be overcome. This seems to be quite rational, if we accept the view that God is fulfilling a purpose through the terrestrial evolution. But when a man is born, he is born in ignorance, helplessly in the course of Nature; when God incarnates in the human body, he does it consciously and as a master of Nature. Thus the Lord says in the Gita: "Though I am the unborn, though I am imperishable in my self-existence, though I am the Lord of all existences, yet I stand upon my own Nature and I come into birth by my self-Maya." Mother Mary represents the own Nature of the Divine, His Consciousness of Unity, as distinguished from the ignorant and divided egoistic consciousness of man; it is through that Truth-consciousness that the Divine incarnates himself, and that is the esoteric meaning of the Virgin Birth; man also will have to rise to that higher consciousness and have a new birth in his own divine nature.

In order to rise to that higher consciousness man will have to pass through a discipline; he will have to give up his lower egoistic desires and attachments which keep him bound to his lower nature; that involves suffering and sacrifice which is represented by animal sacrifice and the crucifixion of the flesh. No one can atone for the sins of another; but one can go through temptations and sufferings in order to show to others the true way of conquering them, and that is the true significance of vicarious suffering. Those who yield to the impulses of the lower nature, go downward and make it difficult for themselves to rise to their higher self and nature; this downward tendency is symbolised by hell; and the last judgment is only an image meant to impress upon crude minds the necessity of following the judgment of their inner soul and conscience, so that they may reject what is evil and retain what is good and helpful in their spiritual progress. The resurrection of the body is the promise of a transformation of the human body when men will have a new birth in the divine consciousness; even Science, as shown by Bergson in his *Creative Evolution*,

holds up the hope that with the progress of evolution man will one day be able to conquer disease, old age and even death, thus achieving a material immortality.

It may be asked if evolution explains the creeds and dogmas of religion, why was it not taught at the very beginning? The simple answer is that people would not have understood it. The discovery of the fact of evolution in Nature has come only when the human mind became capable of receiving and understanding it; and religion has helped in that mental and moral preparation in its own way. The essential teaching of all religion is that there is a God, a Creator and Ruler of the world, that he has intended for man a life of immortal bliss, and that the present life of man, full of death and suffering as it is, is a field of preparation for that higher life. The theory of spiritual evolution brings out the full implications of this teaching. God is our own supreme Self: there is no one to punish us for our sins or reward our virtues in some world above or below our present world; we have to reject sin and practise virtue so that we may fulfil the work for which we have descended into the world from our abode in the Eternal, the work of manifesting under earthly conditions some of the miracles of the Infinite. The fact of evolution, however, was not unknown to the ancient seers as we can see from such Upanishadic texts:

“By Energy at work universal Brahman extendeth itself, and from Brahman is born Matter, and out of Matter cometh life and mind and truth and the worlds and in works immortality.” (Mundaka Upanishad, 1. 1. 8.).

Here is another reference to evolution in the *Aitareya Aranyaka*:

“There are herbs and trees and all that is animal, and he knows the Atman gradually developing in them. For in herbs and trees, sap is only seen but *citta* is seen in animated beings. Among animated beings, again, the Atman develops gradually, and in man, again, the Atman develops gradually, for he is most endowed with ‘prajna’. He says what he has known, he sees what he has known, he knows what is to happen tomorrow, he knows the visible and the invisible world, by means of the mortal he desires the immortal. Thus is he endowed.” (A.A. 2-3-2). This is an echo of such passages in the Rig Veda: “The mortal who longs for the Godhead.” (6-3-1.) “O Flame, thou foundest the mortal in a supreme immortality . . . for the seer who has thirst for the dual birth, thou createst divine bliss and human joy” (1-31-7). That is the eternal message of the Veda to humanity—the course of evolution is not completed in man, it is the flame of aspiration in the heart which will raise man to a still higher and greater consciousness

when human joy will find its fulfilment in divine bliss even in the mortal body changed and transformed.

Mr. Ross cannot accept that any book is divinely inspired. But according to our view the process of evolution is proceeding in Nature under the direct guidance and control of the Divine, and Nature is nothing but his own executive power. Thus the Lord says in the Gita: "I am the presiding control of my own action of Nature, the creative spirit who causes her to produce all that appears in the manifestation. Because of this, O Kaunteya, the world proceeds in cycles." (9/10). So there is nothing unreasonable in God's inspiring some persons with the knowledge which may be helpful to humanity in its onward march; and that is the real origin of all the great scriptures of the world. What Mr. Ross calls divine inspiration of any book is really a body of intuitive knowledge, and intuition as a greater source of knowledge than the human reason is being increasingly recognised by modern thought. It is well-known that without inspiration there can be no true poetry or art; the same also applies to the highest spiritual truths which can be known only by a direct intuition; reason can only come in to state it in a systematic form intelligible to the general mind. There is also nothing inconceivable or unreasonable in the personal interference of God in the process of Nature; modern science admits many "accidents" and mysterious happenings in Nature which cannot be explained by the ascertained laws of Nature. Even those laws also are of the statistical kind, there is no certainty in Nature in what way a particular phenomenon will occur in the atomic world. So far as Science is concerned, there is nothing inconsistent in some power interfering and changing the course of the world without infringing any such law. On the other hand, spiritual evidence shows that there has been an "interference" from above at every critical stage of the terrestrial evolution. Thus the appearance of life in matter, and of mind in life would not have been possible without such intervention. Now the moment has come for another intervention, when a higher power than the mind will appear on the earth to complete the evolutionary process. This is the inner spiritual crisis which has its counterpart in the great cataclysm the world is witnessing today.

Educated men like Mr. Ross regard the existence and activities of angels and devils as without supporting evidence and, therefore, not worth bothering about in practice. But the tradition about the conflict between the powers of Light and Darkness was universal in ancient myth and in religions and common to all systems of occult knowledge. "The theory of this traditional knowledge," says Sri Aurobindo, "is perfectly rational and verifiable by inner experience, and it imposes itself if we admit the supraphysical and do not cabin

ourselves in the acceptance of material being as the only reality Modern thought is aware of no invisible forces other than those revealed or constructed by Science; it does not believe that Nature is capable of creating any other beings than those around us in the physical world, men, beasts, birds, reptiles, fishes, insects, germs and animalculae. But if there are invisible cosmic forces physical in their nature that act upon the body of inanimate objects, there is no valid reason why there should not be invisible cosmic forces mental and vital in their nature that act upon his mind and his life force.”⁶

Subliminal experience shows that there are supraphysical beings “that are attached in their root nature to ignorance, to darkness of consciousness, to misuse of force, to perversity of delight.” It is worth bothering about these beings as they are active to impose their adverse constructions upon terrestrial creatures; eager to maintain their reign in the manifestation, they oppose the increase of light and truth and good and, still more, are antagonistic to the progress of the soul towards a divine consciousness and divine existence. Here we find the true explanation of the appearance of Nazism. The Nazis took a perverse delight in committing atrocities which decent human beings find unbelievable. They contained among them university students, as well as men of high culture and education. How could men of this category commit such diabolical crimes? The explanation is that as Faust sold himself to the Devil, the German people through their lust for revenge and their ambition for world conquest put themselves under the influence of the evil forces who used them as instruments for perpetuating their dominance over the human race and human lives. They are particularly active at this moment as the descent of a new Light on the earth is imminent, humanity is longing to take the next higher step in its evolution which will abolish evil and suffering and establish the reign of light, harmony, joy and beauty on the earth. The evil forces are determined to frustrate this; thus they used the Nazis to destroy everything that could lead to a better humanity. The world never faced a greater crisis; the evil forces could be frustrated only by an overwhelming victory against the Nazis and their ideals; only then can be created conditions in which humanity can proceed safely and peacefully to its destined goal of a divine life on the earth.

V

Superman, the Meaning of the Earth

Our view of evolution not only finds confirmation in the traditional knowledge of mankind, but is in agreement with the latest

⁶ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, pp. 469-71, First Edition.

advance in modern thought. It was Nietzsche who first preached the ideal of the Superman. Thus his message runs: "Man is something that has to be surpassed. Let your will say, the Superman shall be the meaning of the earth. Upward goes our way from species to super-species." But Nietzsche was a prophet who did not understand his own message. He was misled by the meagre account of the process of natural evolution that Science could give. From that account it seemed as if struggle and fight were the ultimate rules of terrestrial life. So Nietzsche thought that man would grow into a higher species only if he could sufficiently cultivate power. He made a new valuation of moral ideas and said, "Good is all that enhances the feeling of power, the will to power and power itself. Evil is all that proceeds from weakness." Power is no doubt an attribute of God who is Almighty, but so also are love, compassion, knowledge, and he alone can be called a superman "who manifests the highest nature of the Godhead in humanity." Power divorced from knowledge will be an aggrandisement of the ego of man, and when pursued exclusively, regarding pity, compassion, fellow-feeling as weakness, it turns men into a personification of the Asura or the Devil. Nietzsche himself suspected this when he said, "Ye would call my Superman a devil?" Hitler claimed himself to be a superman of the Nietzschean type. As a matter of fact, he was a very small man driven by a very great force. He was not a superman at all. But with many he passed as a real superman; perhaps that was inevitable before the appearance of the true type. In the ignorance in which man is living now, he can learn only through bitter experience.

Hitler wanted to make the German people great and powerful so that he might use them as instruments for the indulgence of his blood lust and Asuric propensities. And to fool the German people he wrote the devil's philosophy, the *Mein Kampf*; that book shows how the imperfect account of evolution given by Science can be exploited for diabolical purposes. The ruling of the world by a master race, the use of human beings as slaves, absolute disregard of all standards of morality and decency for the achievement of power, fierce cruelty, treachery—all these things were regarded as a part of the scheme of Nature and were to constitute the New Order which the Nazis held up before mankind and were ruthlessly and shamelessly putting into practice. These things are no doubt in Nature, but in the animal level or rather below it; when men deliberately follow this order of Nature, they become worse than animals and much more dangerous, as they have intelligence which animals lack. Nature has intended man to rise not only above the animal level but also above the human level, and that can happen only by a higher evolution of his consciousness, and not by following the methods that prevail in the animal

world. Until man rises to that higher level, humanity can never be safe altogether from the recurrence of Nazism in some form or other. It is a hopeful sign that this truth is getting increasing recognition by the foremost thinkers of our time. Bergson, Alexander and other modern philosophers have in their own way testified to the evolutionary progress of man. Referring to the pessimistic view expressed by Mr. Joad in his articles, Mr. John Armstrong writes in the *New Statesman*: "If the instinctive creed of the Left founded upon the discovery of man's ascent through evolution is dashed by a couple of wars and a slump—25 years against fifty million—then its professors are men of little faith. Its best achievement, the human brain, could no more be evolved along tramlines of truth and goodness than the body containing it could be proof against pain and death in a world of earthquakes, bacteria and ceaseless flux. If Christ and Beethoven were to be possible, de Sade and Hitler also had to be possible; the technique that can harness the ploughshare to a tractor must be equally capable of turning the sword into a tank. But science has done more for us than explaining suffering and wickedness. It has also given us hope, it has shown us a fundamental unity of all phenomena, however apparently diverse, and this fundamental unity must apply to the mind as part of all phenomena. In that case, having reached a sufficiently high level of development, the mind must attempt to form concepts of that unity and initiate action on the strength of them."

This is an indication of the direction in which the human mind is actually proceeding. But the reason for which all people cannot accept the optimism of Mr. Armstrong is that Science cannot give a completely satisfactory picture of Reality, though this was the aim which the founders of Science had before them. Science gives an account of the external process of evolution, but cannot say anything about the forces that are operating behind that process, and the ultimate goal towards which it is moving. Mr. Armstrong doubts that evolution aims at perfection, because he does not see any spiritual force or consciousness as the source of the whole thing. Jesus gave this message to men, "Be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect." This is possible only if man is fundamentally one with the Divine Being. Then the question would arise, if this world be a manifestation of a Divine Power, why should there be such a slow and difficult process of evolution which Science perceives and in course of which so much pain and suffering inevitably arise? Why is there so much mixture of good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, joy and suffering in a world created by a God who is omniscient, omnipotent and All-Blissful,—and He must be these things if He be a God at all? Science has no means

of answering these questions, and therefore cannot give a theory of life and existence which can be practically helpful and satisfying. If it gives hints which arouse hope, it also leaves many possibilities of misunderstanding which, as we have seen above, give rise to perverted and dangerous ideals.

The knowledge of the external world has put great powers in the hands of men; but for a lack of sufficient knowledge of the inner being of man, of the nature of life and its true aim they have not been able to use these powers properly so as to enrich and ennoble life. Nazism is a grim warning of the dangers of scientific knowledge when it does not find its true fulfilment and basis in spiritual knowledge. The Nazis have drawn from Science their devilish philosophy and also the instruments and means by which to enforce it upon mankind. Mr. Armstrong suggests that when the mind is sufficiently developed, man will rise to a high level of consciousness and a higher mode of life and action. But when will it happen and how? He speaks of millions of years of evolution, but if man does not discover the true technic of changing his nature and consciousness, and that very soon, there does not seem to be much hope of the survival of the *homo sapiens*, as it has already developed malignant traits which will speedily lead it to its destruction.

The nature of the problem and the solution seems to have been better understood by men like Gerald Heard and Aldous Huxley in the West. Referring to their thesis, Mr. Joad once observed: "At present the number of its adherents is small, but its intellectual content is impressive, and if I am right in thinking that it reflects the need of the times from which it takes its rise it may spread with great rapidity." Mr. Heard insists on the necessity of an integral view of Reality in which the knowledge given by analytic science will find its proper place; and for this he lays stress on the necessity of having a deeper knowledge of man and his nature. "We have to produce," says Mr. Heard, "if we are to be saved, a psychology as practical and powerful as our physics. Otherwise our destruction, though as natural and as slowly matured as a typhoon, will be as rapid." And he turns to India, which he aptly calls "the land of psychology" for the knowledge of Yoga which is nothing but practical psychology. Examining the latest data about terrestrial evolution furnished by Science, Mr. Heard introduces the conception of a new mutation occurring this time in the soul of man, as a result of which his consciousness will be so enlarged that it is capable of conceiving and pursuing new ends which are commensurate with his technical mastery of means. If this mutation is to occur, we must co-operate in its production; in other words, we can only change if we will to do

so. Hitherto evolution has been a blind, instinctive thrust. In man the evolutionary process has emerged into consciousness and has become consciously intended. Mr. Heard foresees mutation as immediate practical biological politics.

This has a striking similarity with the view of evolution that we have taken. As Dr. Richard Maurice Bucke also declares in his *Cosmic Consciousness*, to become Cosmic conscious or God-conscious is neither supernatural nor supernormal; it is just the next natural and normal step in human evolution. But the manner in which Mr. Gerald Heard has presented his thesis fails to carry conviction. To convince the Western mind, he has tried to follow the scientific method, but in fact it is rather pseudo-scientific; he selects only those facts which will suit his theory, and then interprets them with a bias. Thus to prove that man's evolution is not over, he puts forward a strange theory about pain and sex. He himself says, "It need hardly be said that such a hypothesis is as complete a reversal of the common sense view of pain, as it is of the scientific." Then he has proposed a technique which looks very much like a revival of the old monastic life, with all its rigour and asceticism, only without the religious sanction behind it. It is no wonder that though he has succeeded in rousing curiosity and provoking thought in certain quarters, he has not been able to convince anybody except his near disciples like Mr. Aldous Huxley. In his novel, *After Many a Summer*, the latter propounds the philosophy that we have it in our power to climb out and up, on to the level of eternity and that no human society can become conspicuously better than it is now unless it contains a fair proportion of individuals who know that their humanity isn't the last word and who consciously attempt to transcend it. The novel gives a concrete picture of the principles of this faith functioning in everyday world, but the result is depressing.

VI

Philosophy of Divine Life

Referring to the view point put forward by Mr. Gerald Heard in his book, *Pain, Sex and Time*, Prof. Joad remarks, "I would like to hold Mr. Heard's view and did once contrive to hold something very like it. I have, however, largely been dispossessed of it by the difficulties which critical philosophers have pointed out." The reason of Mr. Heard's failure is that he has somehow got only a mental idea of the thing, but has no deep and comprehensive vision which can

come only by a supreme Yogic discipline and *sadhana*. The subject was dealt with comprehensively in all its aspects and with a deep and penetrating vision by Sri Aurobindo in his book, *The Life Divine*, which appeared serially in the *Arya* during the first World War. If humanity had accepted that message delivered by the great Yogin of India, there would not have been a second World War. But the world was not yet ready for that, so the message remained unheeded. It is very significant that the reprint of that message in book form synchronised with the outbreak of the recent war. "*The Life Divine*", said the late Sir Francis Younghusband, "could not have appeared at a more opportune moment. Some time may elapse before its importance can be appreciated. Then slowly and surely it will make its influence felt . . . I really do quite genuinely consider it the greatest book which has been produced in my time." Let us hope that humanity this time will accept this divine message thus averting for ever the danger of another world war.

We shall conclude this article briefly considering the difficulties in Mr. Heard's theory which have been specifically pointed out by Professor Joad. The first difficulty mentioned is the relation between matter on one side and life and consciousness on the other. This is the difficulty inherent in all "scientific" account of the evolutionary process, it states the fact of the appearance of life and consciousness in matter and of their subsequent development but cannot give any explanation of this fact. Life and consciousness could not have appeared in matter, if all the three principles had not been essentially one, as was seen by the ancient Vedanta. Materialism indeed insists that inconscient matter is the ultimate reality, and that consciousness is a product, an epi-phenomenon of matter and cannot exist or operate without it. "This orthodox contention, however, is no longer able to hold the field against the tide of increasing knowledge. Its explanations are becoming more and more inadequate and strained. It is becoming always clearer that not only does the capacity of our total consciousness far exceed that of our organs, the senses, the nerves, the brain, but that even for our ordinary thought and consciousness these organs are only their habitual instruments and not their generators. Consciousness uses the brain which its upward strivings have produced, brain has not produced nor does it use the consciousness." It is this truth about the relation of matter and consciousness which Mr. Heard does not seem to have grasped clearly; his theory suggests that the surplus physical energy which is supposed to exist in men will be transmuted into a higher consciousness. This is an impossible position to hold. It is consciousness which is the ultimate reality, and matter is only a product, a form of consciousness.

But how can consciousness take the form of inert matter is a problem which has baffled philosophers from ancient times, and the illusionist theory cut the knot by holding that matter was an illusion. For the first time in the history of philosophy Sri Aurobindo has given a clear and detailed exposition how and why consciousness takes the form of matter, and he has thus given a completeness to the philosophy of a divine life to be realised on the earth and in the material body, as has never been done before.

The next difficulty pointed out by Professor Joad is, how can a process which is originally blind (as Mr. Heard suggested) emerge into purposiveness? Here again Mr. Heard is influenced by Western Immanentists like Bergson. According to the latter, God is finite, not omnipotent, limited by matter, and overcoming its inertia painfully, step by step; and not omniscient, but groping gradually towards knowledge and consciousness and "more light". This is an absolutely untenable view about God and cannot be accepted by any spiritual view of the world. The view that Sri Aurobindo has taken is "of all existence as one being whose essential nature is Consciousness, one Consciousness whose active nature is Force or Will; and this Being is Delight, this Consciousness is Delight, this Force or Will is Delight. Eternal and inalienable Bliss of Existence, Bliss of Consciousness, Bliss of Force or Will whether concentrated in itself and at rest or active and creative, this is God and this is ourselves in our essential, our non-phenomenal being. Concentrated in itself, it possesses or rather is the essential, eternal, inalienable Bliss; active and creative, it possesses or rather becomes the delight of the play of existence, the play of consciousness, the play of force and will. That play is the universe and that delight is the sole cause, motive and object of cosmic existence. The Divine Consciousness possesses that play and delight eternally and inalienably; our essential being, our real self which is concealed from us by the false self or mental ego, also enjoys that play and delight eternally and inalienably and cannot indeed do otherwise since it is one in being with the Divine Consciousness. If we aspire therefore to a divine life, we cannot attain to it by any other way than by unveiling this veiled self in us, by mounting from our present status in the false self or mental ego to a higher status in the true self, the Atman, by entering into that unity with the Divine Consciousness which something superconscious in us always enjoys,—otherwise we could not exist—, but which our conscious mentality has forfeited."⁷

"Thus by the very nature of the world-play as it has been conceived by Sachchidananda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss) in the

⁷ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, pp. 216-17, First Edition.

SPIRITUAL BASIS OF WORLD ORDER

vastness of His existence extended as Space and Time, we have to conceive first of an involution and self-absorption of conscious being into the density and infinite divisibility of substance; for otherwise there can be no finite variation; next, an emergence of the self-imprisoned force into formal being, living being, thinking being; and finally a release of the formed thinking being into the free realisation of itself as the One and the Infinite at play in the world and by the release its recovery of the boundless existence-consciousness-bliss that even now it is secretly, really and eternally. This triple movement is the key of the world-enigma.

"It is so that the ancient and eternal truth of Vedanta receives into itself and illumines, justifies and shows us all the meaning of the modern and phenomenal truth of evolution in the universe, and it is so only that this modern truth of evolution which is the old truth of the Universal developing itself successively in Time, seen opaquely through the study of Force and Matter, can find its own full meaning and justification,—by illuminating itself with the Light of the ancient and eternal truth still preserved for us in the Vedantic Scriptures. To this mutual self-discovery and self-illumination by the fusion of the old Eastern and the new Western knowledge the thought of the world is already turning."⁸

The third difficulty in Mr. Heard's thesis to which Prof. Joad refers is that it gives no indication of the activities of the enlarged consciousness. Mr. Heard's ideal is a life that transcends individuality which he regards as "only a husk and shell, confining and constricting full life and experience". This strangulating shell has to be broken so that our consciousness may return to its "direct and unhindered flow in the vast current of universal being". But this is a half-truth; the individuality is a centre which the infinite Being is using as a mask and instrument for various self-expression; it is the mental ego which is the distorting element that has to be transcended and not the true individuality. What Mr. Heard advocates is virtually Buddhistic Nirvana which is inconsistent with world-play and inevitably leads to asceticism and life-negation. "The integral view of the unity of Brahman avoids these consequences. Just as we need not give up the bodily life to attain to the mental and spiritual, so we can arrive at a point of view where the preservation of the individual activities is no longer inconsistent with our comprehension of the cosmic consciousness or our attainment to the transcendent and supra-cosmic. For the World-Transcendent embraces the universe, is one with it and does not exclude it, even as the universe embraces the individual, is one with him and does not exclude him. The individual

⁸ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, pp. 171-72.

is a centre of the whole universal consciousness; the universe is and definition which is occupied by the entire immanence Formless and Indefinable. This is always the true relation, from us by our ignorance or our wrong consciousness of When we attain to knowledge or right consciousness, nothing es in the eternal relation is changed, but only the inview and the o from the individual centre is profoundly modified and consequ also the spirit and effect of its activity.”⁹

As regards the activities of the enlarged consciousness Aurobindo thus observes in *The Life Divine*:

“It is almost universally supposed that spiritual life necessarily be a life of ascetic sparseness, a pushing away that is not absolutely needed for the bare maintenance body; and this is valid for a spiritual life which is in its and intention a life of withdrawal from life. Even apart that ideal it might be thought that the spiritual turn must make for an extreme simplicity, because all else would be of vital desire and physical self-indulgence. But from a standpoint this is a mental standard based on the law Ignorance of which desire is the motive; to overcome Ignorance, to delete the ego, a total rejection not only of but of all the things that can satisfy desire may intervene a valid principle. But this standard or any mental standard cannot be absolute nor can it be binding as a law of consciousness that has arisen above desire; a complete purification self-mastery would be in the very grain of its nature and would remain the same in poverty or in riches; for if it be shaken or sullied by either, it would not be real or would be complete. The one rule of the gnostic life would be the expression of the Spirit, the will of the Divine Being; that that self-expression could manifest through extreme simplicity through extreme complexity and opulence or in their balance,—for beauty and plenitude, a hidden sweetness laughter in things, a sunshine and gladness of life are also p and expressions of the Spirit. In all directions the Spirit v determining the law of the nature would determine the of the life and its detail and circumstance. In all there v be the same plastic principle; a rigid standardisation, ho necessary for the mind’s arrangement of things, could not b law of the spiritual life. A great diversity and liberty of expression based on an underlying unity might well be

⁹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, pp. 57, 58.

manifest; but everywhere there would be harmony and truth of order.”¹⁰

“It is evident that in a life governed by the gnostic consciousness war with its spirit of antagonism and enmity, its brutality, destruction and ignorant violence, political strife with its perpetual conflict, frequent oppression, dishonesties, turpitudes, selfish interests, its ignorance, ineptitude and muddle could have no ground for existence. The arts and crafts would exist, not for any inferior mental or vital amusement, entertainment of leisure and relieving excitement or pleasure, but as expressions and means of the truth of the spirit and the beauty and delight of existence. Life and the body would be no longer tyrannous masters demanding nine-tenths of existence for their satisfaction, but means and powers for the expression of the spirit. At the same time, since the matter and the body are accepted, the control and the right use of physical things would be a part of the realised life of the spirit in the manifestation in earth-nature.”¹¹

VII

Pattern of a New World

“The continuation of evolution consciously to a higher consciousness”, says Mr. Heard rightly in his book, *Pain, Sex and Time*, “needs complete devotion, complete knowledge and a complete way of life”; and he proceeds to give indications of the psychiatry, the economy and the policy which are the minimum if man is to attain that trained condition in which alone his further evolution is possible. That man can take a forward step in his evolution, that this is the moment in Life’s growth, in humanity’s advance, in civilization’s explication when such a mutation must be made, must be made in consciousness and if not made, then our precarious, over-reaching effort (failing to find the keystone) must crash; there can be no reasonable doubt about it, so concludes Mr. Heard. He does not think that the whole race will be transformed automatically in the course of Nature; there must be pioneers, who will first rise to the higher level, and then help and lead others towards that; there should be organised centres where the pioneers living under suitable conditions and appropriate discipline can achieve their mutation. In all this Mr. Heard is no doubt on the right track. “It is not indeed necessary or possible”, says

¹⁰ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, pp. 1180-81.

¹¹ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, pp. 1179-80.

Sri Aurobindo, "that the whole race should transform itself from mental into spiritual beings, but a general admission of the ideal, a widespread endeavour, a conscious concentration are needed to carry the stream of tendency to its definitive achievement."

But when suggesting a technique, the actual "psychistry" by which man is to transform himself, Mr. Heard seems to lose his way in a wilderness of mental ideas and constructions. He is for an amalgamation of animal training, psycho-analysis, Raja Yoga and also other Indian systems. But modern psychology is still in a too crude stage to serve as a basis for a discipline which can bring about a radical change in human nature and consciousness. As regards Raja Yoga and other Indian systems from which Mr. Heard has drawn many of his ideas, they also are not adequate for our purpose, though they are no doubt powerful systems in their own way based on a profound knowledge of man, and we can learn many things from them. Some one has observed that Indian Yoga is not suitable for Western people; the truth is that those ancient systems are not suitable to modern times and modern needs. In order to attain some sort of *siddhi* in Raja Yoga one must make that the sole occupation for the rest of one's life. Those ancient systems of Yoga showed the possibilities inherent in man, and the heights of perfection to which his mind and body can arrive; but now Nature has to take a forward step in evolution by which a new type will be produced who will have all that perfection and more as a normal possession. "It has besides to cease to be a purely individual achievement by a difficult endeavour. It must become the normal nature of a new type of being." (Sri Aurobindo.)

Man cannot raise himself to that new type solely by his own effort as the ape before him could not have turned itself into a man. And here we meet with the greatest defect in the technique of Mr. Heard; he has no need for divine intervention or help. In taking this view, he has no doubt been influenced on the one hand by Buddhism and on the other by Western Positivism. But we must remember that the former had for its aim not the uplifting of the human race to a higher level, but an escape from a world which was supposed to be intrinsically evil, and for that purpose individuals, who like to do so, can follow either Buddhistic or Rajayogic methods. Positivism also had for its aim the alleviation of human suffering, not any radical change or transformation of human nature. That transformation can only be accomplished if and when the Divine grace find the conditions in which it can operate. It has been seen that the moment for that supreme divine intervention has arrived; the personal effort required on the part of the human individual is to be conscious of the goal and to call for it with a fixed and unfailing aspiration and

to put himself unreservedly into the hands of the Divine Power and reject everything from his nature that stands in the way of its operation.

"The supramental change", says Sri Aurobindo, "is a thing decreed and inevitable in the evolution of the earth-consciousness; for its upward ascent is not ended and mind is not its last summit. But that the change may arrive, take form and endure, there is needed the call from below with a will to recognise and not deny the Light when it comes, and there is needed the sanction of the Supreme from above. The power that mediates between the sanction and the call is the presence and power of the Divine Mother. The Mother's power and not any human endeavour and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda."¹²

It may very well be that the conditions of the appearance of the new race will be first fulfilled in India, "the source-land of all religions". And indeed the work has already begun there under the highest auspices and is making good progress. But so that the work might proceed uninterruptedly to its fulfilment, it was absolutely necessary that India and the world be made free from the menace of the Nazi anti-Christ. Mr. Heard is against the use of violence, and believes that Neo-Brahmins who have developed psychic powers by Yogic exercises will be able to resist all aggression by non-violent methods. But this presupposes that humanity would grow spiritually; there would have been no such chance left if the Nazis could establish their domination over humanity, as they would certainly have done if the United Nations had not made an all-out effort to crush them by physical force. "The world is aware", says Mr. Heard, "that physical violence and the pretended sanction it claims to give, are about to destroy civilised life". That of course is the view of the pacifists; but the sanction of physical violence is certainly not a pretension, it has a basis in the truth of present-day humanity. Even Buddha, the apostle of non-violence, said in reply to a question put to him by a general that it might become a necessity and a duty to fight aggression. As we find in the Gita, Krishna, the Lord of Yoga, appointed the archer Arjuna to annihilate the evil power of Duryodhana, and supported the physical prowess of Arjuna with his yogic spiritual force. The teaching of the Gita in this respect is quite clear; first, as long as humanity is not ready spiritually, morally, socially for the reign of universal peace, the duty of a fighter has to be accepted; secondly, if he fights for a righteous cause, offering his

¹² *The Mother*, pp. 83-85.

work as a sacrifice to the Divine, that work with all its violence becomes itself Karma Yoga by which man can attain to spiritual life and perfection.

It is beyond our scope to discuss in detail the political and economic order which should be established in the world, now that the Nazi menace is averted. That order will be most favourable for the flowering of a spiritual humanity which will give the utmost possible freedom to the individual as well as to the community to develop and grow in their own way. A balance has to be found between the two poles of existence, "the individual whom the whole or aggregate nourishes and the whole or aggregate which the individual helps to constitute. The perfection of human life must involve an elaboration of an as yet unaccomplished harmony between these two, the individual and the social aggregate. The perfect society will be that which most entirely favours the perfection of the individual; the perfection of the individual will be incomplete if it does not help towards the perfect state of the social aggregate to which he belongs and eventually to that of the largest possible human aggregate, the whole of a united humanity."¹³ "The individual is indeed the key of the evolutionary movement; for it is the individual who finds itself, who becomes conscious of the reality." But the increasing tendency in modern times is to regard the individual as a member of the collectivity "whose existence must be subordinated to the common aims and total interest of the organised society, and much less or not at all as a mental or spiritual being with his own right and power of existence". "It is not in this direction that evolutionary Nature has pointed mankind; this is a reversion towards something that she had left behind." "Man's true way out is to discover his soul and its self-force and instrumentation and replace by it both the mechanisation of mind and the ignorance and disorder of life-nature. But there would be little room and freedom for such a movement of self-discovery and self-effectuation in a closely regulated and mechanised social existence."¹⁴

The insistence of Democracy on the freedom of the individual, of socialism on a well-ordered collective life, of Fascism on the nation-idea, of Marxism on the removal of poverty and exploitation of the labouring class and adoption of an international outlook, of Nazism on the significance of race, of imperialism on building up a higher human grouping than the nation—each of these insistences has truth in it and must be recognised in an ideal order of human life. But like all mental ideals they are only partial truths and are often mixed

¹³ *The Ideal of Human Unity* by Sri Aurobindo.

¹⁴ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Ch. XXVII.

up with much error and falsehood; and when pursued with vital egoistic self assertion and violence, disregarding the claims of others and violating the dignity and sacredness of human body and life, they become an immense source of evil and suffering to mankind.

The conflict between socialism and democracy will be solved when the true relation will be found between the individual and the society. "In the vicissitudes of human thought, on one side the individual is moved or invited to discover and pursue his own self-affirmation, his own development of mind and life and body, his own spiritual perfection; on the other he is called on to efface and subordinate himself and to accept the ideas, ideals, will, instincts, interests of the community as his own It is evident that all this conflict of standards, is a groping of the mental Ignorance of man seeking to find its way and grasping different sides of the truth but unable by its want of integrality in knowledge to harmonise them together. A unifying and harmonising knowledge can alone find the way, but that knowledge belongs to a deeper principle of our being to which oneness and integrality are native. It is only by finding that in ourselves that we can solve the problem of our existence and with it the problem of the true way of individual and communal living."¹⁵

The insistence of Marxism on the necessity of class conflict and violence for bringing about a better economic order, rises from a misunderstanding of the evolutionary process in Nature; indeed the modern ideal, the conscious stress on the material and economic life is in fact "a civilised reversion to the first state of man, his early barbaric state and its preoccupation with life and matter, a spiritual retrogression with the resources of the mind of a developed humanity and a fully evolved Science at its disposal." Capitalism is often regarded as the root evil and it is associated with imperialism. As a matter of fact there is no essential relation between the two. Russia, in spite of her Communism, is a great imperialist power; sixty million Russians—the rest are a conglomeration of peoples—rule over one hundred and seventy million peoples. As a result of the Bolshevik revolution born out of the first World War, Russia disappeared as an aggressive empire and transformed itself from an imperialistic aggregate into a congeries of free republics—not so free in practice under Bolshevik rule as in principle—but the principle on which Lenin insisted so much is there and it is capable of development in a freer future. Then there is the British Commonwealth, an outstanding formation with its self-governing dominions, showing that imperialism is not an evil in itself and can very well serve as a half-way house towards a free world union. Capitalism also has to be seen in its true

¹⁵ *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, pp. 1151-52, First Edition.

light. As has been amply shown, "it can be induced or forced to consent to an economic order in which suffering, poverty and exploitation shall be eliminated and the wealth of the community be more equally shared by all who help to create it. In all direction, men have to come into their own, realise the dignity and freedom of the manhood within them and give play to their utmost capacity." The Social Security plan recently proposed in Britain and America shows a definite move in this direction. The plan presented by President Roosevelt to Congress on March 10, 1943, went far beyond anything the United States has ever had. The right of every citizen to work and freedom from want and unemployment was laid down as a basic principle. The poorer classes have the right, it insists, to better education, health service and cultural facilities and these benefits can and must be provided from the national income. "We must not return", said the President, "to the inequities and fears of the past but ought to move forward towards the promise of the future."

"The nation is a persistent and psychological unit which Nature has been busy developing throughout the world in the most various forms and educating into physical and political unity. All modern attempts to destroy by force or break up a nation are foolish and futile." But Hitler replied that this was an illusion which came from lack of thoroughness in the attempt; and he proceeded to break the spirit and patriotism of all the conquered nations. Since the day of Charlemagne, Europe was never so ready to become united. Given a little psychological sense, the conquered peoples might have been induced to settle down to absorption in Hitler's New Order. But the Nazis soon showed themselves in their true light, and stubborn resistance to German overlordship developed everywhere. The nation, however, is not the ultimate human unit, and an international order has to be found out in which the whole of humanity can live as one family; Nature has been ever preparing mankind for that consummation. "Mankind as a whole has always striven to organise a universal state. There have been many great nations with great histories, but the more developed the more unhappy they were, they swept like hurricanes over the face of the earth striving to subdue peoples, and they too were but the unconscious expression of the same universal unity."¹⁶

Mankind is now in a position to make a conscious effort to fulfil this universal urge. But a world-order is too big a thing; there must be different orders of grouping as stages rising to the higher unity and also as gradations in that great complex whole. And in the formation of such groups, the race idea, so abused by the Nazis, can be helpful.

¹⁶ Dostovsky : *The Brother Karanozov*.

Sri Aurobindo suggested an ideal world-system in the pages of the *Arya* during the first World War; and we find to-day that modern thought is coming round to that: "It is easy to build up a system in the mind and propose to erect it on foundations which would be at first sight rational and convenient. At first sight it would seem that the unity of mankind could most rationally and conveniently arrange itself upon the basis of a European grouping, an Asiatic grouping, an American grouping with two or three sub-groups in America, Latin and English-speaking, three in Asia, the Mongolian, Indian and West-Asian with Moslem North Africa as an annexe, four in Europe, the Latin, Slavonic, Teutonic and Anglo-Celtic, the latter with the colonies that still choose to adhere to it, while Central and Southern Africa might be left to develop under present conditions but with the more human and progressive principles upon which the sentiment of a united humanity would insist."¹⁷

The idea of Europe, Asia and America as separate organised units was taken up by the Axis powers but as means for their own domination rather than a sincere solution of the international problem. Mr. Churchill has proposed a Council of Europe and a Council of Asia as the basis of a future world order; he did not mention America, perhaps because there is already the Pan-American combination. The formation of national groupings on the basis of race as suggested above has obvious difficulties. Thus Mongolian Japan and Mongolian China engaged in a deadly fight. The Slavonic group has similar internal difficulties consisting in the traditional animosity between the northern Slavs and the southern Slavs. Arab and Turk and Persian, although one in Islamic religion and culture, would not, if their present sentiments towards each other persisted, make an entirely happy family. "But these antipathies," said Sri Aurobindo with a far-reaching vision, "really persist only so long as there is some actual unfriendly pressure or sense of subjugation or domination or fear of the oppression of the individuality of the one by the other; once that is removed they would be likely to disappear. It may be that a great change and revolution in the world would powerfully and rapidly abolish all the obstacles, as the obstacles of the old regime to a uniform democratic system were abolished in France by the French Revolution."

It may take some time before humanity can arrive at an ideal arrangement; it may be necessary to begin with the domination of the world by a group of powers such as the United Nations with several great Powers taking the lead. But it is better to have the ideal solution in our mind from the very beginning and to use it as an

¹⁷ *The Ideal of Human Unity*.

ultimate standard in judging all questions of national and international relations. "In principle then, the ideal unification of mankind would be a system in which, as a first rule of common harmonious life, the human peoples would be allowed to form their own groupings, according to their natural divisions of locality, race, culture, economic convenience, and not according to the more violent accidents of history or the egoistic will of powerful nations, whose policy it must always be to compel the smaller or less timely organised to serve their interests as dependents, or obey their commands as subjects." "We seem at the present moment to be very far away from such a rational solution, and indeed at the opposite pole of human possibilities; we have swung back to international disorder, and to the vital and animal principle of the struggle for survival, not of the humanly fittest but of the strongest. But the very intensity of this struggle and disorder may be the path, Nature has chosen towards the true escape from it; for it is becoming more and more evident that a long continuance of the present international state of humanity will lead, not to any survival, but to the destruction of civilization, and the relapse of the race towards barbarism, decadence, and evolutionary failure. The antipathy or hostility or distrust of nations, races, cultures, religions, towards each other is due to past habits of egoistic self-assertion, desire for domination, for encroachment upon the *lebensraum* of another, and the consequent sense of unfriendly pressure, the fear of subjugation or elimination and oppression of the individuality of one by the other. A state of things must be brought about in which mutual toleration is the law, an order in which many elements, racial, national, cultural, spiritual, can exist side by side and form a multiple unity; in such an order all these antipathies, hostilities, distrusters would die from lack of nourishment. That would be a true state of perfectly developed human civilisation, a true basis for the higher progress of the race. In this new order, India, with her spiritual culture turned towards the higher aims of humanity, would find her rightful place, and would become one of the leaders of the human evolution, by the greatness of her ideals and the capacity of her peoples for the spiritualisation of life." (Sri Aurobindo).

Sri Aurobindo and Hegel

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I have been feeling for sometime that no study of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy can be complete which does not bring it into relation with the great system of Hegel. This is because Hegel represents the culminating point of what may be called Europe's perennial philosophy, the philosophy which, starting from Socrates, has dominated, and is still dominating, philosophical thought there, as no other philosophical system has done. There is also another reason why I feel that a comparison between Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and that of Hegel is very necessary. It is from the point of view of the completion of my comparative studies in the former's philosophy. I have already, in the pages of this Annual, brought Sri Aurobindo's philosophy into relation with two of the most important currents of Western thought at the present moment, namely, the anti-intellectualistic current represented by Bergson, and the philosophy of values, of which the most important spokesman is Nikolai Hartmann. What remains for me to do now to complete the picture is to show the relation between Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and the great rationalistic thought of Europe, of which Hegel is undoubtedly the chief exponent. This is why, when the organizers of this Annual asked me for the fifth time in succession—a great honour, for which I take this opportunity of expressing my deep gratitude to them—to write something for it, I chose *Sri Aurobindo and Hegel* as the subject of my article.

Thought and Being are Identical

There are certain cryptic sayings which have changed the whole course of human thought. Such are the famous statements of the Upanishads, like *tat tvam asi*, *sarvam khalvidam Brahma*, *so'ham asmi*. A statement of Hegel which has created a similar revolution in human thought is his famous saying: Logic coincides with Metaphysics.

Upon this statement rests the whole of Hegel's philosophy. The identity of logic with metaphysics, which means the identity of thought

and being, is the foundation upon which is erected the gigantic structure of the Hegelian system.

This famous statement occurs at p. 45 of his *Logic* (*Encyclopædia of the Philosophical Sciences*. Wallace's translation) which I shall refer to henceforward in this article simply as *Smaller Logic*, to distinguish it from his *Science of Logic*. In explaining what is meant by this statement, Hegel says, (*Ibid*, p. 46), "To speak of thought or objective thought as the heart and soul of the world, may seem to be ascribing consciousness to the things of nature. We feel a certain repugnance against making thought the inward function of things, especially as we speak of thought as marking the divergence of man from nature. It would be necessary, therefore, if we use the term thought at all, to speak of nature as the system of unconscious thought, or, to use Schiller's expression, a petrified intelligence. And in order to prevent misconception, thought-form or thought-type should be substituted for the ambiguous term thought". He continues: "If thought is the constitutive substance of external things, it is also the universal substance of what is spiritual. In all human perception thought is present; so too thought is the universal in all the acts of conception and recollection; in short, in every mental activity, in willing, wishing and the like. All these faculties are only further specialisations of thought. When it is presented in this light, thought has a different part to play from what it has if we speak of a faculty of thought, one among a crowd of other faculties, such as perception, conception and will, with which it stands on the same level. When it is seen to be the true universal of all that nature and mind contain, it extends its scope far beyond all these, and becomes the basis of everything. From this view of thought, in its objective meaning as *nous*, we may pass to consider the subjective sense of the term. We say first, Man is a being that thinks; but we may say also at the same time, Man is a being that perceives and wills. Man is a thinker, and is universal; but he is a thinker only because he feels his own universality. . . ."

From these long quotations from his *Logic* two things stand out clearly. The first is that for Hegel thought is the constitutive principle of all objective reality. This is evident from the fact that no department of this reality has been excluded from its scope. Hegel anticipates some difficulty on the part of his readers in accepting this position, and therefore hastens to add that in Nature thought is present in an unconscious form. But whether present in a conscious or unconscious form, thought is the constitutive principle of all objective reality. In fact, the difference between one reality and another from this point of view will be only one of degree and dependent-upon the

explicitness or implicitness of thought present in it. As we shall presently see, this puts its distinctive stamp upon the whole of the Hegelian philosophy.

The second thing that emerges from these quotations is that all consciousness, whether perceptual or conceptual or volitional, is reducible to thought. Thought is the ultimate form of all consciousness, all consciousness looked at from the point of view of subjective experience. Readers of Bradley's *Principles of Logic* or Bosanquet's *Logic or The Morphology of Knowledge* will have no difficulty in understanding this. Just as for Bradley and Bosanquet all explicit consciousness is a judgment, so for Hegel it is thought. Even implicit consciousness, that is, consciousness which struggles to be explicit but has not yet become so, is to be regarded as thought, thought in one of its earlier and implicit forms.

*Mc. Taggart's failure to grasp the true meaning of Hegel's
identification of Thought and Being*

In spite of Hegel's very definite and unambiguous language, as appears from the quotations we have given above, his commentators—even some of the best among them—have failed to grasp his true meaning. Mc. Taggart, for instance, whose interpretation of Hegel is considered one of the most authoritative, has given such a weak and halting interpretation of this identification of thought and being as has completely robbed it of its revolutionary character and given it quite a 'respectable' appearance. I crave the indulgence of the readers to quote *in extenso* from his book *Studies in Hegelian Dialectic* to prove my point. At p.26 of this book he says, "It is beyond doubt that Hegel regarded his Logic as possessing, in some manner, ontological significance. But this may mean one of two very different things. It may mean only that the system rejects the Kantian thing-in-itself, and denies the existence of any reality except that which enters into experience, so that the results of a criticism of knowledge are valid of reality also. But it may mean that it endeavours to dispense with or transcend all *data* except the nature of thought itself, and to deduce from that nature the whole existing universe. The difference between these two positions is considerable. The first maintains that nothing is real but the reasonable, the second that reality is nothing but rationality. The first maintains that we can explain the world of sense, the second that we can explain it away. The first merely confirms and carries further the process of rationalisation, of which all science and all finite knowledge consist; the second differs entirely from

science and finite knowledge, substituting a self-sufficient and absolute thought for thought which is relative and complementary to the *data* of sense. It is, I maintain, in the first of these senses, and the first only, that Hegel claims ontological validity for the results of the Logic. . .”

He, however, has a vague feeling that Hegel really goes much further than this. This is evident from what he says on the next page(p.27): “It cannot be denied, however, that Hegel does more than is involved in the rejection of a thing-in-itself outside the laws of experience. Not only are his epistemological conclusions declared to have also ontological validity, but he certainly goes further and holds that, from the consideration of the existence of pure thought, we are able to deduce the existence of the worlds of Nature and Spirit. Is this equivalent to an admission that the worlds of Nature and Spirit can be reduced to or explained by, pure thought?”. And then he goes on to show that this is not the case. To prove this, he relies upon the fact that the dialectic process “is no less analytic of a given material than it is synthetic from a given premise, and owes its impulse as much to the perfect and concrete idea which is implicit in experience, as to the imperfect and abstract idea which is explicitly before the student. For if the idea is, when met with in reality, always perfect and concrete, it is no less true that it is, when met with in reality, invariably, and of necessity, found in connection with sensuous intuition, without which even the relatively concrete idea which ends the Logic is itself an illegitimate abstraction. This being the case it follows that, as each stage of the Logic insists on going forward to the next stage, so the completed logical idea insists on going forward and asserting the co-existence with itself of sensuous perception.”

From these quotations it appears that, in Mc. Taggart's view, to say that reality means nothing but rationality implies explaining away the world of sense. This may be Mc. Taggart's view, but this is certainly not the view of Hegel. Hegelians should be grateful to him for his defence of Hegel against a serious charge, namely, that of doing away with the world of sense and substituting for it a world of pure thought. But this gratitude does not mean that they can accept his position, namely, that to say that reality is nothing but rationality means doing away with the world of sense. It does mean certainly the reduction of sensuous experience to thought, but it does not mean explaining it away. Hegel, in fact, maintains both these positions, namely, the reality of sensuous experience and its reduction to thought. The view which Hegel takes of sensuous experience may or may not be the correct one. But that is not the question we are discussing here. The question we are discussing is simply: What is Hegel's

view of sensuous experience? There is no doubt that Hegel has reduced sensuous experience to thought. But so has he reduced volition, intuition, faith, in fact, every consciousness. He has reduced all these to thought, because thought is for him the basic or foundational consciousness. This is clear from the passages from his *Smaller Logic* which we have already quoted. "In all human perception," says Hegel, "thought is present; so too thought is the universal in all the acts of conception and recollection; in short, in all mental activity, in willing, wishing and the like. All these faculties are only further specialisations of thought." But although Hegel has reduced sensuous experience to thought, he has not negated it or explained it away. What he means is that it has nothing in it which is discontinuous with thought.

The root of Mc. Taggart's difficulty lies in his view that for Hegel nothing is real but the reasonable, but not reality is nothing but rationality. Now Hegel himself has referred in his *Smaller Logic* (p. 10) to the two statements he made in his preface to his *Philosophy of Law*, namely, (1) What is reasonable is actual, and (2) What is actual is reasonable. In connection with these statements he says, "The actuality of the rational stands opposed by the popular fancy that Ideas and ideals are nothing but chimeras, and philosophy a mere system of such phantasms. It is also opposed by the very different fancy that Ideas and ideals are something far too excellent to have actuality, or something too impotent to procure it for themselves. This divorce between idea and reality is especially dear to the analytic understanding which looks upon its own abstractions, dreams though they are, as something true and real, and prides itself upon the imperative 'ought', which it takes especial pleasure in prescribing even on the field of politics. . . . The object of philosophy is the Idea: and the Idea is not so impotent as merely to have a right or an obligation to exist without actually existing. The object of philosophy is an actuality of which those objects, social regulations and conditions, are only the superficial outside." (*Ibid*, pp. 11-12).

There is no doubt, therefore, that Hegel maintains both the propositions: The real is the rational, and the rational is the real. Caird has shown this very clearly at p. 185 of his small book on Hegel (Blackwood's Philosophical Classics), which is a veritable gem. He says, "In spite of the apparent contingency or external necessity by which things seem to be ruled, it has been shown that "that only is real which is rational"; and in spite of the resistance which things present to what seem to be our highest aims and endeavours, it has been shown that "that only is rational which is real".

But why should it be supposed that these propositions mean any

negation of sensuous experience? Sensuous experience is real for Hegel because it also *is* thought. Sensuous experience and thought, in fact, are different grades of the same reality, the essential nature of which is expressed by thought. Hegel also says that thought which is unrelated to sensuous experience is an abstract thought, and as such, an incomplete thought. Do these things show that for Hegel sensuous experience is unreal? In fact, it has never occurred to Hegel that to maintain the reality of an experience, we have to prove its independence of thought. That may be a very plausible view of its reality, but it is not Hegel's view. For Hegel any idea of such independence is repugnant. He would call it not independence but isolation. And isolation for him is another name for fragmentariness, finitude, incompleteness, imperfection. The degree of reality, in fact, of any experience is for him measured by the quality of thought that is present in it. If any experience is absolutely unrelated to thought, then its degree of reality will be zero. But this is an impossibility, for there can be nothing which is outside of reality.

The fact of the matter is that Mc. Taggart has read his own view of reality into Hegel's philosophy. As he cannot conceive of any reality of sensuous experience without freedom from dependence upon thought, he makes Hegel also ascribe to sensuous experience independence of thought. What we see here is very similar to what Stirling has pointed out in his *Secret of Hegel* in connection with the interpretations of Hegel's philosophy by Schwegeler and others. Schwegeler, for example, has unduly accentuated the relation between Philosophy proper and the Empirical Sciences, and has all but rejected Hegel's identification of Philosophy and History. This, however, as Stirling points out (*Secret of Hegel*, Vol. II, p. 403), gives a wrong idea of the Hegelian philosophy: "The identification of the historical with the logical evolution Schwegeler combats from the position of the contingency of the former. He says, 'This view is neither to be justified in its principle, nor made good historically'. But he who were thoroughly on the standpoint of Hegel, would see that while the contingency (even that of those who appear on the stage of History) is not denied, but, on the contrary, its relative necessity demonstrated, the *principle*, all being at bottom but an evolution of *Thought*, must be true, and must be capable of being actually discerned across the fluctuation of the Outward".

For Hegel the World-View of Thought is one of Continuity

I need not make further quotations. It is perfectly clear that for Hegel Being is Thought and Thought is Being. What, however,

is his conception of the nature of Thought? What is for him the essential feature of the World-view of Thought? Expressed in one word, it is: Continuity. The world of thought knows no gaps anywhere. As thought and reality are identical for him, this means also that reality has no gaps or discontinuities anywhere. This may be expressed in very various ways as that reality is perfectly consistent, that it is completely coherent, that it is a perfectly continuous whole, and so on. In fact, the words continuity, coherence and consistency mean the same thing, and may be treated as synonymous terms.

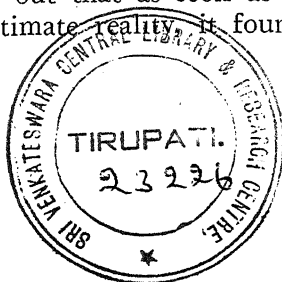
To establish this double truth (which is really the double phase of the same truth), namely, that thought is perfectly coherent and that reality has no gaps or discontinuities anywhere, is the main work of Hegel's logic. And it is for this reason that he has challenged the Law of Contradiction and its offshoot, the Law of Excluded Middle. But, as we shall presently see, this challenge is for the purpose of a truer and stronger affirmation of the Law of Contradiction. If the Law of Contradiction, as it is ordinarily stated in the textbooks of logic, is to be accepted, then there will be enormous gaps in thought. At every step thought meets with contradictions, and if it is not in its power to overcome them, then it can never reach its goal, which is absolute reality. This, of course, does not matter, so long as thought is treated, as it is done in formal logic, as abstract and artificial. But it is a serious matter, if it is taken, as it is done by Hegel, as a full and complete expression of reality. In that case, the inability of thought to overcome contradiction will really mean its inability to express reality. Looked at again, from the point of view of reality, if reality is supposed to be one continuous whole, then there cannot be any contradiction which it is not in the power of reality to overcome. In other words, in a world governed by the principle of continuity, there cannot be any room for absolute contradictories, like A and not-A. Such absolute contradictories exist only in the imagination of the formal logician, and have no place in the real world. The proper statement of the Law of Contradiction is, therefore, not as it is ordinarily done in textbooks of logic, where it is put in the form: A thing cannot be both A and not-A at the same time, but the proper statement must be of the form: In the real world there are no contradictories, like A and not-A, which are absolutely irreconcilable. Hegel, therefore, has banished all absolute contradictions from the real world. For him antitheses exist for the sake of a higher synthesis, negations for the purpose of establishing a higher affirmation.

When Kant in the chapter of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, called The Transcendental Dialectic, pointed out that as soon as thought wanted to say something about the ultimate reality, it found itself

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face to face with insoluble contradictions, and drew from it the conclusion that thought should never go beyond the region of the phenomenal world, he stated a fact correctly, but drew a very wrong conclusion. It was not because thought had to deal with the world of noumena that it became involved in contradiction, but it was the nature of thought to raise contradictions and to overcome them for the sake of arriving at a higher truth. Kant had hit upon a very important truth concerning the nature of thought, but unfortunately, he failed to grasp its true significance. The two contradictories which Kant found confronted thought at every step, are both imperfect expressions of truth, and it is only in their reconciliation that we reach a higher truth. Kant was also mistaken in thinking that these contradictories were insoluble. When a higher truth is reached in this way through the reconciliation of two contradictories, it must not be supposed that it is a permanent resting-place for thought. It is only a temporary halting-ground, for when the light of criticism falls upon it, it splits itself up, as before, into contradictories, and again the same necessity arises of a reconciliation. This is the inner story of the march of thought from truth to truth, till the highest truth, the Absolute, is reached. When it is viewed purely from the inner side, it represents what Hegel calls the dialectical process of thought. But it is the same process which, when viewed externally, that is, as a process in time, we call History. Thus, we come to one of the main principles of the Hegelian philosophy, namely, that the dialectical process and the historical process are identical.

Bradley's Attempt to Play Hegel Against Hegel

Before I pass on to deal with the challenge of this world-view of Hegel's, namely, the world-view of continuity, I have to mention one curious development of the principle of continuity which seeks to demolish with its help the great structure raised by Hegel. I refer to Bradley's attempt in his *Appearance and Reality* to prove that the very principle of continuity which is the life-breath of thought, proves its destruction. It is a very curious development of his philosophy, of which we were given no warning in his *Principles of Logic*. There we were told that thought could march from judgment to judgment in a triumphal procession and reach the citadel of the Absolute itself, without coming across any barriers at all. Here, for the first time, without any warning, thought is presented with an ultimatum: Either you stop marching further, or if you are consumed with a desire to trespass into regions where you are not entitled to go, you must drink

the hemlock and commit suicide. A very strange ultimatum indeed! And what did thought do to merit this fate? Did it change the direction of its march, did it accept the guidance of any other principle than that of continuity or coherence? Nothing of the kind. And yet at a certain point of its journey it is asked either to retrace its steps or drink the hemlock.

After having been mentioned honourably in the despatches, if not awarded the Victoria Cross, it is now told bluntly that it does not know how to handle its gun, namely, its weapon of continuity or coherence. And what are the reasons which are given for this strange verdict? These are stated in *Appearance and Reality* (2nd edition, revised, p. 170) as follows: "Let us assume that existence is no longer different from truth, and let us see where this takes us. It takes us straight to thought's suicide. A system of content is going to swallow up our reality; but in our reality we have the fact of sensible experience, immediate presentation with its colouring of pleasure and pain. Now I presume there is no question of conjuring this fact away; but how is it to be exhibited as an element in a system of thought-content, is a problem not soluble. Thought is relational and discursive, and if it ceases to be this, it commits suicide, and yet, if it remains thus, how does it contain immediate presentation?"

What are we to make of this paragraph? It is quite clear that thought meets this fate, not because it does not know how to handle its own weapon, but because it does not know how to handle a weapon which it was never taught to handle. This new weapon is that of discontinuity. Thought is blamed for not being able to deal with a world which presents discordances or discontinuities. One such discordance is mentioned here, namely, the discordance between feeling and thought. In a world full of such discontinuities, how can thought, wedded as it is to the principle of continuity, succeed? This is, in fact, the sum and substance of this paragraph. Bradley therefore here has clearly shifted his ground in order to pronounce capital sentence upon thought. His world is no longer one which is ruled by the principle of continuity or coherence, but is one which is ruled, at least partially, by the principle of discontinuity. The charge against thought thus becomes frivolous. How can you blame thought, which is taught to deal with a world of perfect coherence, for its inability to handle a discontinuous world?

And yet Bradley will not admit that he has changed his view of reality, which is no longer one of complete coherence, but where discontinuity has distinctly entered as an element. He still wants us to believe that he is still as great a devotee of the doctrine of coherence as he ever was. That the incapacity of thought lies in its inability to

grasp a world of discontinuities and not in its failure to comprehend a perfectly consistent world, appears more clearly from the sentences which occur immediately after the ones we have quoted. "Let us suppose," says Bradley, "the impossible accomplished; let us imagine a harmonious system of ideal contents united by relations, and reflecting itself in self-conscious harmony. This is to be reality, all reality, and there is nothing outside it. The delights and pains of the flesh, the agonies and raptures of the soul, these are fragmentary meteors fallen from thought's harmonious system. But these burning experiences—how in any sense can they be mere pieces of thought's heaven? For, if the fall is real, there is a world outside thought's region, and if the fall is apparent, then human error itself is not included there. Heaven, in brief, must either not be heaven, or else not all reality. Without a metaphor, feeling belongs to perfect thought, or it does not. If it does not, there is at once a side of existence beyond thought. But if it does not belong, then thought is different from thought discursive and relational" (*Ibid*, pp. 170-71).

If we do not allow ourselves to be hypnotised by the great beauty of these sentences but probe deep into their meaning, what is it that we find? Do we not find clear evidence of what we have just said, namely, that Bradley has shifted his ground, and that his conception of reality is no longer one of perfect coherence but one of discontinuity? What these sentences, in fact, clearly assert is the presence of a big gulf between feeling and thought. They point therefore to a fundamental discontinuity in reality. What they state against thought really is that, adhering as thought does to the principle of coherence, it is impossible for it to grasp truly the nature of reality which is partly discontinuous. To understand reality we have therefore to discard thought and take recourse to intuition. This, in fact, is the gist of his criticism of thought. But why does he not admit it? Why does he try to delude us into thinking that, although his conception of reality is the same as that of Hegel, namely, that of a perfectly coherent whole, he has proved the inefficacy of thought and taken recourse to intuition for the purpose of understanding the true nature of reality? As a matter of fact, as I have shown in a recent paper of mine, he has discarded the Hegelian principle of Continuity and accepted that of Emergence.

*Challenge to Hegel's Philosophy : The World-View of
Emergent Evolution*

Bradley, therefore, has not been able to kill Hegel with his own weapon. There he has failed. But he has succeeded in another

direction. He has been instrumental in introducing a principle which offers a direct challenge to the Hegelian philosophy. This is the principle of Emergence. The fight on the philosophical front is no longer between Mechanical Evolution and Teleological Evolution, but between Continuous Evolution and Emergent Evolution. Bergson's Creative Evolution is also a form of Emergent Evolution, because there lurk in his idea of creativity the ideas of surprise, uncertainty and incalculability. Bergson, in fact, has protested more violently than any other philosopher, either living or dead, against the conception of Evolution 'according to schedule'. There is no schedule in existence; all schedules exist to be broken. The world is a world of surprises, uncertainties, discontinuities. More or less the same thing has been said by Alexander and other champions of Emergent Evolution. Evolution for all of them is made possible by the emergence of the new, which must be treated as a fundamental departure from the old, and must in no sense be regarded as a deduction from, or a continuation of, the old.

Perennial philosophy in the West has held fast as its sheet-anchor to the principle of Continuity. Its last great champion was Hegel. But it is now fighting with its back to the wall. It has had its day, and it must now leave the field to the new-comers as gracefully as possible. The phenomenal rise in recent years of the philosophy of values has further hastened its fall, for the philosophy of values is essentially a philosophy of emergence. But it is not from the West alone that the challenge to this philosophy has come. Far more powerful than the attack from the West is the attack that is launched against it from the East, for Sri Aurobindo champions a form of Emergent Evolution which constitutes a far greater challenge than any attack it has had so far to face in the West. To this we have now to come.

*The Challenge to Hegel's Philosophy of Continuity
from the East*

Perhaps the earliest mention we have of the discontinuous view of reality is in the famous Purusha Sukta of the Rigveda. It describes the Purusha from whom the whole world originated, as follows:

सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः
सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् ।
स भूमिं विश्वतो वृ-
त्वात्यतिष्ठद्दशांगुलम् ॥१॥

पुरुष एवेदं सर्वं
यद्भूतं यच्च भव्यम् ।
उतामृतत्वस्येशानो
यदन्नेनातिरोहति ॥२॥

एतावानस्य महिमा-
तो ज्यायांश्च पूरुषः ।
पादोऽस्य विश्वा भूतानि
त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि ॥३॥

त्रिपादूर्ध्वं उदैत्पुरुषः
पादोऽस्येहाभवत्पुनः ।
ततो विष्वङ् व्यक्राम-
त्साशनानशने अभि ॥४॥

These verses may be translated as follows (adopting, with slight changes, Peterson's translation):

1. The Purusha had a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet; he covered the earth on all sides, and stretched ten fingers' length beyond it.
2. He was all that is and all that will be; ruling over immortality, he was all that grows by food.
3. Such is his greatness, but greater than all his greatness is the Purusha himself. This whole world is a fourth of him, three-fourths of him are immortal in the sky.
4. For with three-fourths the Purusha went on high; but a fourth of him remained here, and then spread on all sides, over the living and lifeless world.

The first verse makes a most significant assertion: अत्यतिष्ठद्दशांगुलम् 'he exceeded the whole world by ten fingers'. This clearly shows that the world cannot be equated with the Purusha, for there is a discontinuity between the two. The whole of the Purusha is not melted into the world. This is rendered more explicit in the third and fourth verses, where it is said that only one-fourth of the Purusha is in our world, the rest of him being in the region of the skies.

This is the foundation of the emergent view of evolution in our country. As the Purusha does not melt Himself completely into the world, evolution of the world can only be through successive emergences of higher and higher consciousness from Him. These emergences are really descents of the Divine Consciousness. We thus come to the doctrine of Avatara which has been expounded in the fourth chapter of the Gita. The Gita speaks of a double current in evolution. The first, which is the normal current, does not require any Divine intervention, and can flow on smoothly of itself. But it cannot do so for very long. A time comes when it meets with obstacles which it is beyond its power to remove. It is then that Divine intervention steps in, removes the obstacles which blocked the progress of the world, and sets free the current of evolution. Such a crisis in the evolution of the world the Gita calls धर्मस्य ग्लानिः 'deterioration of Dharma', because it describes every process in terms of its spiritual significance.

This direct intervention by God and the resulting emergence of a new consciousness are for the Gita an absolute essential of world-evolution.

This is, in briefest terms, our Indian challenge to the doctrine of continuity. It does not reject *in toto* this doctrine, but it sets up, along with it, the principle of emergence, without which we cannot obtain a complete picture of evolution. Likewise it does not mean the elimination of thought from all effective share in the direction of the evolutionary process, but the setting of definite limits to its effectiveness, and the supplementation of it by other types of consciousness which are more at home in a discontinuous world.

Sri Aurobindo's Conception of Emergent Evolution

For Sri Aurobindo the world does not evolve of itself in a continuous process, but it requires at every crucial stage of its evolution Divine intervention in the shape of a direct descent of the Divine Consciousness. No radical change in the stage of evolution is for him possible without such a Divine Descent. The lowest stage of Evolution is Matter. Matter cannot automatically raise itself into the next higher stage, Life, but Life can only emerge as a result of a fresh descent of the Divine Consciousness into the world. So again, Life cannot evolve of itself into the next higher stage of evolution, Mind, but the Divine Consciousness must descend in order to lift the world from the stage of Life to that of Mind. Matter, Life, Mind, therefore, are successive emergents, the appearance of which has been made possible by successive acts of Divine Descent. We are at present in the stage of evolution represented by Mind. We can no doubt advance to some extent with the help of Mind and the other principles that are at our disposal. But a fundamental and radical change in the character of ourselves and of our universe will not take place through any effort of ours, through any application that we can make of the principles that have already emerged, such as Matter, Life, Mind and Psyche or Soul. These can no doubt take us a little further on the road to progress, but they cannot take us very far. Their unaided efforts are inadequate to effect any radical change in the nature of man or of the world. That must wait for a further descent of the Divine Consciousness. The whole world, in fact, is waiting for such a descent. Without it man's aspiration after a Divine state can never be fulfilled.

Does this view of Evolution cripple man and reduce thought to a nullity? It shows no doubt that man cannot by his own efforts alone reach his destined goal. But this, far from crippling man,

rather gives him unlimited possibilities of expansion. He has now, in addition to his own resources, the Infinite Power of God to help him rise higher and higher in the scale of evolution.

As for thought, it no doubt confines it within well-defined limits, but within these limits, it certainly makes it very effective. For instance, in the present stage of our evolution which is dominated by mind, thought, says Sri Aurobindo, is our chief organizing agency. I have already dealt with this point in a recent article of mine* and therefore, all that I would like to say here is that this crippling of thought, if at all it can be called so, is a consequence of the view of thought held by Hegel himself. For if, as Hegel strongly insisted, the world-view of thought is one of continuity, then it must naturally be incapable of understanding the world in the shaping of which the principle of emergence plays the most important part. The sweep and range of the principle of emergence are infinitely greater than that of the principle of continuity. Evolution on the lines of continuity is a very tame affair, compared with that based on the principle of emergence. Its dance is a marionette dance, not at all comparable to the world-shaking and world-shaping dance of Shiva which is envisaged by emergent evolution. Its chief defect is its self-centred isolation ; it cuts us off from the spiritual forces which are but dimly perceived by us. It must give up this isolation and surrender to the Divine forces which are shaping the destiny of the world. It must realize that the course of the world is not something that can be calculated beforehand, for it is a world of "mysteries, prodigies, without end, without dimension," as Amiel says in his *Journal Intime*. To understand its nature we must break the enchanted circle that thought has created and come out in the open, "for the sheer joy of cutting ourselves adrift, for the sheer pleasure of running and moving" "लुटे यावार छुटे याबार चलवारइ आनन्देते" as the poet has put it. Continuity can function very well in a ready-made world, but it can give no guidance in a world which is constantly springing surprises upon us.

I know Hegelians will challenge this position. They will swear that theirs is no block universe, but one which is capable of infinite expansion. No doubt their block universe is not the same as that of mechanical evolution. But from Sri Aurobindo's point of view, any conception of the world from the standpoint of any of the principles that have so far emerged, cannot be anything else than that of a block

* See my article *The nature and function of thought in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy* ("Advent", Nov. 1945).

universe, for it shuts the door upon new world-views that will emerge with the emergence of principles which we only very dimly understand at present. What Sri Aurobindo will say to these ardent Hegelians will be something like this: 'No doubt you have worked wonders with the help of the few principles that were at your disposal, but for God's sake, do not mortgage the future, for it is replete with possibilities, of which you cannot form the faintest idea.'

One thing, however, must be said here. If you adopt the Hegelian principle of continuity, there is no escape for you from thought. There Hegel is perfectly right. I have already shown how utterly Bradley has failed in his attempt to discard thought, while yet sticking to the Hegelian principle of continuity. It is only when you give up continuity and adopt the principle of emergence, that you can abandon thought and take recourse to some other principle, such as intuition.

Sri Aurobindo's principle of emergence is based not upon the idea of the suicide of the lower principles but upon that of their transformation, which we may call a kind of re-birth.

One thing we should always remember in connection with Sri Aurobindo's conception of emergent evolution. It is that, unlike Bradley's conception, it is based not upon the suicide of the lower principles, but upon that of their transformation. This transformation we may call a re-birth to indicate the radical nature of the change that will come upon them. When a higher principle emerges, the lower ones do not remain where they were before its emergence, but they are benefited by it. They, in fact, undergo a radical change, which is expressed by saying that they are transformed. The new principle brings about a total change in the character of the world as it existed before its emergence.

This view of emergence, we may note, is different from Alexander's. In Alexander's scheme of emergent evolution there is no change of the old principles on the emergence of a new one. The old principles remain as they were before ; only a new one joins them. For Sri Aurobindo, however, evolution does not mean merely an addition of some new principles to those which are already existent but it means that the old principles, by reason of the emergence of the new ones, change their character. Life, for instance, as it was before the emergence of Mind, is very different from Life as we know it today, dominated as it is by Mind. So again, he believes when the principle of Supermind will emerge, all the principles which are existent to-day, such as Matter, Life, Mind and Soul,

will undergo a radical change. Even the physical universe will be very different from what it is at present, for it will cease to offer any resistance to the Spirit, but on the contrary, will work in perfect co-operation with it.

Sri Aurobindo's conception of the Absolute, as compared with that of Hegel.

I will conclude this brief comparative study of the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and Hegel by dealing with their respective conceptions of the Absolute. The Absolute of Hegel is the Absolute of Thought and the principle of thought, as I have already pointed out, Continuity. It is therefore related to the finite world as the more complete is related to the less complete, as the more perfect is related to the less perfect. In other words, the difference is one of degree. The Absolute contains no truth which is not to be found in the lower categories of thought, but it contains the truths of all of them in a higher or more complete form. So that, although it is true that nothing is to be found in the Absolute which is not to be found in the world of finite beings, it is equally true that everything which is found in the world of finite beings is present in the Absolute in its complete or perfect form. This will be clear from the following quotation from Hegel's *Smaller Logic* (Wallace's translation, pp. 374-75): "To speak of the absolute idea may suggest the conception that we are at length reaching the right thing and the sum of the whole matter. It is certainly possible to indulge in a vast amount of senseless declamation about the idea absolute. But its true content is only the whole system of which we have been hitherto studying the development. It may also be said in this strain that the absolute idea is the universal, but the universal not merely as an abstract form to which the particular content is a stranger, but as the absolute form, into which all the particular categories, the whole fulness of the content it has given being to, have retired. The absolute idea may in this respect be compared to the old man who utters the same creed as the child, but for whom it is pregnant with the significance of a lifetime. Even if the child understands the truths of religion, he cannot but imagine them to be something outside of which lies the whole of life and the whole of the world. The same may be said to be the case with human life as a whole and the occurrences with which it is fraught. All work is directed only to the aim or end; and when it is attained, people are surprised to find nothing else but just the very thing which they have wished for. The interest lies in the whole movement. When a man

traces up the steps of his life, the end may appear to him very restricted ; but in it the whole *decursus vitae* is comprehended. So too, the content of the absolute idea is the whole breadth of ground which has passed under our review up to this point."

From this passage it is clear that for Hegel the Absolute Idea is the fulfilment or completion of all the other categories. What these categories aimed at but could not realize, is realized in the Absolute Idea. The difference between it and the other categories he likens to the difference between the child's conception of religion and the old man's. The child views religion as something outside of its life and its world. This externality vanishes in the old man's view of it. Similarly, the externality which is present in the conception of reality as it finds expression in the lower categories, disappears in the Absolute Idea. Take, for instance, the category of causality. The cause-effect relationship is not a perfectly internal one. The cause is somewhat external to the effect, as the latter is external to the cause. But in the Absolute Idea this externality completely vanishes. It vanishes, because it is not external to the cause-effect relationship or to any other relationship that the categories may conceive, but these relationships find their fulfilment in it.

This is as far as we can proceed with the help of logic. It takes us to the Absolute Idea which is the fulfilment and completion of the categories. But the Absolute Idea is still in the domain of the abstract. It is Reason which has not yet manifested itself. And by the same inner dialectic by which Being passes into non-Being, the Absolute Idea as a bare abstract idea must pass into its opposite, that is to say, into the Unconscious, as the first step towards concretisation. This is the stage of Nature, the first stage in the process of the concretisation of the logical Idea into actual reality. But the process which begins with Nature does not stop there. In Nature the Idea works unconsciously. From this stage of unconsciousness it gradually rises to higher and higher forms of consciousness in man. This is its passage from Nature to Spirit. The highest manifestation of the Spirit is Philosophy. Here the Idea which, in its need for concretisation, broke loose from itself, completely returns to itself. This philosophy, however, is not any philosophy that has been propounded by any man, living or dead (though the critics of Hegel wrongly say that this philosophy is Hegel's own philosophy), but it is the expression of the Spirit when it is truly free, that is, when it is in a position to overcome all externality. It is, in other words, the Absolute Spirit when it is really absolute, that is, when it has diverted itself of all externality and has become completely internal. Art and Religion also are manifestations of the Absolute Spirit, but in both of them there is some externality,

the content or matter being an inadequate expression of the form, which is nothing else than the consciousness of the Absolutè.

What we find in all this conception of the Absolute is a gigantic development of the idea of continuity. There is continuity between one logical category and another, there is continuity between the logical categories and the Idea, and there is also continuity between the logical Idea and its manifestation in the universe. Taking the most general form of its manifestation in the world to be history, we may say that the main feature of Hegel's conception of the Absolute is the perfect continuity between logic and history. The real world follows in its evolution the same principles as are shown in logic in the development of thought.

An important point has been raised by Mure in his book *An Introduction to Hegel*. He maintains that Hegel's thought is not merely thought but also intuition. From this point of view, Hegel's Absolute will be not merely an Absolute of thought but also of intuition. Let us try to understand what Mure means by saying that Hegel's thought is not merely thought but also intuition. At pp. 114-115 of this book he says, "We have seen that Hegel restores to thought the intuitive factor in knowledge, the moment of immediate existence and individuality, which Kant had confined, at least in respect of human knowing, to passive sensibility. In thus denying the Kantian divorce between thinking and knowing, in thus giving a far more real meaning to that activity which Kant had continued to attribute to thought emasculated of its intuitional moment, Hegel in a sense returns to a position common to all Kant's greatest predecessors. In different forms the conception of intuitive thought is present equally in Aristotle and in Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz. But none of these thinkers had, in Hegel's view, clearly grasped either (a) the general nature of intuition, or (b) its relation to discursion within the nature of thought itself. . . . As against these modern thinkers Hegel saw in the religious view of the world a form of experience less complete than philosophy. His conception of thought as intuitive is an effort to expand the Aristotelian *nous* and to surpass both the view of thought as illuminant and the idea of it as creative. At least in Aristotle and Descartes intuition tends to become wholly severed from discursion. We seem to be presented with a number of self-evident truths whose connection with the consequences supposed to follow from them thus becomes inexplicable. We are confronted with a dilemma: either inference is a tautologous *petitio principii* or it is an inconsequent leap to a fresh intuition. Hegel's conception of thought as dialectical is an attempt to solve this dilemma. His hope is to show that it arises from conceiving two moments of unity in

abstract separation. Thought is intuitive, but so far *merely* immediate. It is discursive, but this *discursus* is its own activity of self-mediation. Moreover, this mediation is a self-development towards new immediacy which mediation enriches; a progress and yet a return upon itself. The whole activity, verbally expressed as if it were three temporary phases, is real only in the union of the first and second moment in the third".

From these long passages of his book, it appears that for Mure wherever there is immediate existence and individuality, we have clear evidence of the work of intuition and not of thought, and because Hegel's thought embraces both, therefore it must be said to have in it an intuitive factor. Now what is to be noted in connection with Hegel's view of thought is that the same principle which guides thought in its discursive activity is precisely the one which makes it immediate and concrete. He does not think he is adding any new factor to thought when he makes it individual and immediate. The root of discursive thinking for Hegel is the maintenance of continuity. When, on the strength of a middle term, we join the major and minor terms in a syllogism, we do nothing but maintain the continuity of thought and avoid a hiatus. The same principle of continuity leads to concreteness and immediacy. Concreteness means that the universal is not detached from the particular, but maintains its continuity with the particular. So, again, immediacy means nothing but the continuity between thought and experience. Thought which is severed from actual experience is, from Hegel's point of view, an abstract thought, and as such, an incomplete thought. The same reason which makes Hegel say that opposites cannot break the unity of thought, induces him also to say that concreteness and immediacy cannot break the unity of thought. In fact, the main object of Hegel is to show that discursive thinking cannot remain confined within the limits of discursive thinking, but that it must develop into concrete and individual experience.

As I have already said, if intuition is to be a principle different from thought, it must be in a position to help us where thought fails to give us guidance. Such a position arises when we try to grasp a discontinuous reality. There we realise the limitations of thought, for thought utterly fails to comprehend discontinuity. But where thought is in its element, as in the comprehension of continuity, it is absurd to thrust in intuition and say that it also grasps continuity as well as, if not better than, thought. Either the Absolute of Hegel is one of continuity or it is not. If it is, then thought alone can have access to its inner shrine. If it is not, then Hegel was absolutely mistaken in thinking that thought could give access to it.

For Sri Aurobindo the whole conception of the Absolute, as we find it in Hegel, is artificial. It is, in fact, a man-made Absolute, and differs from the real Absolute as an artificial flower differs from a genuine one. Hegel has constructed the Absolute with the help of the principle of thought which is available to man in his present consciousness. But any principle which is accessible to man at present, is a hopelessly inadequate one, and therefore, any attempt to construct the Absolute with its help is bound to fail. The principle of continuity, in the light of which Hegel understands the Absolute, is itself an abstract principle, and naturally its shortcomings must affect the conception of the Absolute based upon it.

The Absolute is not merely the present world or the present human consciousness raised to the *nth* power, but it has in it features which have not yet manifested themselves anywhere in the universe. Only certain indications which we observe force us to the conclusion that the present state of the universe is not its final state, but that it is bound to rise to higher and higher levels and eventually reach the Absolute. The chief of such indications is the presence in man of an aspiration—an aspiration after a condition immeasurably higher than the present one. This takes the form of a sort of Divine discontent, which is the chief characteristic of man, his refusal to be satisfied with anything that he gets. But this Divine discontent does not give us any idea as to what will give ultimate satisfaction to man.

The Absolute, in Sri Aurobindo's view, cannot be identified with any type of human consciousness that has so far emerged, neither with thought, nor with will or feeling or intuition. It is an altogether different consciousness from any of which we have knowledge. So, again, its content cannot be identified with any of the logical categories known to us. It is neither Being nor Becoming, nor Cause nor Substance. It is also not possible to describe the Absolute through pairs of contradictories, and call it both *Sat* and *Asat*, Limited and Unlimited, Phenomenal and Noumenal. Sri Aurobindo indicates this very clearly. Thus he says (*The Life Divine*, Vol. I, pp. 78-79), "On the one hand to Sachchidananda transcendent of the forms of the universe the dual terms themselves, even if so understood, can no longer be applicable. Transcendence transfigures; it does not reconcile, but rather transmutes opposites into something surpassing them that effaces their oppositions".

The Absolute, moreover, cannot, in his opinion, be called a mere fulfilment of human consciousness. Fulfilment refers to the realization of an object which is distinctly apprehended. Thus we speak of the fulfilment of our desires, our wishes, our purposes. Here fulfilment has got a definite meaning; the object which we desire or wish or

propose to realize we definitely know, and fulfilment means only the actual realization of this definitely conceived object. Here, in the case of the Absolute, however, it far transcends any object that we may desire or wish, or of which we have the faintest idea. How can it be said then to be a fulfilment of what we are or what we long to be? Sri Aurobindo is very explicit on this point. Thus he says, (*The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 79), "At first, however, we must strive to relate the individual to the harmony of the totality. There it is necessary for us—otherwise there is no issue from the problem—to realize that the terms in which our present consciousness renders the values of the universe, though practically justified for the purposes of human experience and progress, are not the sole terms in which it is possible to render them and may not be the complete, the right, the ultimate formulas. Just as there may be sense-organs or formations of sense-capacity which see the physical world differently and it may well be better, because more completely, than our sense-organs and sense-capacity, so there may be other mental and supra-mental envisagings of the universe which surpass our own". To speak of the Absolute as only a fulfilment of what we are, would keep us more or less to our present level. It smacks too much of a block universe. Sri Aurobindo's idea of the Absolute is totally different from this. Not by any extension or expansion of our present nature, but by a radical transformation of it, can we reach the Absolute.

This brings in a new factor in the relation between ourselves and the Absolute. As Hegel views it, we can automatically reach the Absolute by ascending the steps of the ladder which he has placed between us and the Absolute. For Sri Aurobindo, however, no effort on our part can take us to the Absolute. It is for the Absolute to make a gesture; it is its Grace alone which can raise us to higher and higher levels, eventually placing us on its throne. Without such Divine Grace, there is no possibility of our getting anywhere near the Absolute. There is no trace of this conception of Grace in Hegel's philosophy.

An Introduction to the Poetry of Sri Aurobindo

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There is a genuine hesitation in the self-appointed task of the literary impresario, especially when the *maestro* is Sri Aurobindo. Very few know that Sri Aurobindo "once said that he had been first and foremost a poet and a politician, only later he became a Yogi. We can safely amend the statement by saying that even before he became a politician he had been a poet, indeed he was born as a poet and he is a born poet."¹ Though, contrary to the popular myth, there is very little of ivory in the solitary room he occupies, he is yet unfamiliar to the general reader of poetry. For many reasons, not the least of which is his apathy towards publicity of any kind; for the outside world his successive fame as a nationalist and a Yogi has tended to throw his work as a poet to the background. Also, but for the recent *Collected Poems and Plays*² his works have not always been within easy avail. Even when available there are serious lacunae. Over and above these, in his maturer verses, say of the last fifteen years, he has continuously, even if with plenty of variation, spoken of unknown or little known modes of the being. Finally, there is a large section of his poetry where he has used new metres and rhythms, "not only new rhythms but a new principle of rhythm—or at least one that is not very familiar". These and other reasons call for some kind of introduction.

To say that his poetry is the poetry of yoga would be a quintessential statement indeed. But the real task is to elaborate this central theme or motif, so that some idea of its reality and splendour may be communicated; also to trace and focus, so far as is possible

¹ Publisher's Note in the *Collected Poems and Plays*, 1942.

² In two volumes, with Appendices. Copyright, 1942. Publisher: Nolini Kanta Gupta, Sri Aurobindo Asram, Pondicherry. Printed at Government Central Press, Hyderabad, Deccan, India. 15/- or 30s. only.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE POETRY OF SRI AUROBINDO

from these published fragments³ without very definite chronology⁴—and with occasional reference to his other works—the unity and growth of the poetic sensibility revealed in these poems.

‘Had we vision to see’⁵ it would have been easier to form a better idea and picture of Sri Aurobindo’s poetry. But

*We are blind with our pride and the pomp of our passion.
We are bound in our thoughts where we hold ourselves free.*

The novelty and the otherness of his poetry may, however, stir in many minds an unnamed curiosity and even a vague ecstasy. That is a danger, if it were to attract the reader only by its strangeness. It is strange to and for our workaday responses, even to the normal levels of imagination, but its appeal is not to be confused with the appeal of the exotic. The vague ecstasy would be justified and without danger if it were to form a base or lead to a closer understanding or enjoyment. Another likely obfuscation would be to identify this poetry with yoga or spirituality. “Sri Aurobindo is always a call to spiritual adventure”, as Mr. Sethna puts it, and it is primarily in this light that his poems should be viewed. But the poems *qua* poems should not be neglected. He has written poems, not yoga illustrated in verse. It is as a poet therefore that his work should be judged and enjoyed. “It must be understood however”, as he himself says, “that the greatness of poetry as poetry does not necessarily or always depend on the level from which it is written.”⁶ But, to repeat, his inmost poetry deals with experiences which have been mostly beyond the ken of the earth-bound poetic

³ “. A number of other poems were written during residence in Bengal but they were lost in the house searches, trials, hasty displacements and other vicissitudes of those years of political action, among them two short narrative pieces, a drama “The Viziers of Bassorah”, a translation in terza rima of Kalidasa’s “Cloud Messenger”, and renderings from the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Vaishnava poets. There is a great mass of poems written during the twenties and thirties and after, but never having been published they fall outside the scope of this collection.” From the Publisher’s Note to *Collected Poems and Plays*.

⁴ “. The dates of individual poems are not always ascertainable.” *Ibid*.

⁵ *Who*, from *Poems*.

⁶ Comparing Yeats and A. E., Sri Aurobindo once wrote: “. But all the same when one speaks of poetry it is the poetical element which one must give the most importance. What Yeats expressed, he expressed with greater poetical beauty, perfection and power and he has besides a creative imagination, while A. E. has only a certain though considerable interpretative power. A. E.’s thought and way of saying and seeing things is much more sympathetic to me than Yeats’ who only touches a brilliant floating skirt-edge of the Truth of things—but I cannot allow that to influence me when I have to judge of the poetic side of their respective achievements.”

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sensibility, "not very much frequented by common readers of poetry". A knowledge and acceptance of these experiences—and the conditions of their expressions—should be fundamental in evaluating such work as Sri Aurobindo's.⁷ Some metaphysical—and technical—buttress or bridge connecting it with the hierarchy of the imaginative experiences of mankind is probably unavoidable.

A variety of new poetry and newer ideas on poetry have been broadcast in contemporary literature,—pure, metaphysical, occult, primitive, Chinese, imagist, surrealist, leftist, and so on. It is a delicate task to sift and choose in this bewildering crowd, and the temptation to classify, or condemn, Sri Aurobindo by these different yardsticks has to be controlled.

To give only one or two examples. M. Saurat, for instance, has tried to press the claims of what he calls philosophical poetry or the poetry of the occult.⁸ Taking a number of major poets, like Spenser, Milton and Blake, among others, he has no difficulty in establishing their borrowings from ancient literature mostly cabalistic or esoteric. It is true that this thought-content endows the works of these poets with grandeur and even a kind of permanence. But almost always this thought-content has been "coated over with mental stuff", and that is understandable, for man is primarily a mental being. By spiritual standards their poetry is almost turbid. In Spenser it is Platonic and Puritanic by turns; in Milton it is part of a risky rhetoric; in Blake it bursts with a cataclysmic energy and epigrammatic force. This philosophical poetry can never be called spiritual poetry without doing violence to the word spiritual. In these poets, except Blake, it is really, what Sri Aurobindo would call, the poetic intelligence which works. (He has himself a large body of writing of this kind.) "The poetic intelligence is not at all part of that clarified spiritual seeing and thinking—it is only a high activity of the mind and its vision moving on the things of the imagination, but still akin to the intellect proper, though exalted above it." It is true, all the same, that "something from the substance of the planes of spiritual seeing can come into this poetry whose medium is the poetic intelligence and uplift it", as it does, very differently, in Milton and Blake.

Saurat speaks of a "new intellectual race which made its appearance at the Renaissance.... It is the philosophical poetry of this

⁷ Is the problem of belief unavoidable? We waive it, at any rate for the present.

⁸ *Literature and the Occult Tradition*.

Also see *The Poetry of the Invisible* by Mehdi Inam, where a theosophical

race which best expresses its most deeply rooted and powerful characteristics.... The philosophic poets are not scholars, are not even philosophers. Their synthesis is that of the desires.... They see and express the discontentment or the unsatisfied longings of the men of their own time.... These metaphysical ideas belong to another order of truth. They are strange ambassadors coming from inaccessible realms. We find in them criticism and organisation of the most subtle and important human experiences: the cultivation of the knowledge of ourselves in the domain of higher inclinations".

There are significant distinctions to be drawn between this philosophical poetry tinged as it is with the contemporary anthropological temper and Sri Aurobindo's poetry. In Saurat "the strange and cosmological myths" are, as he himself emphasises, "artistic truths," "one must know that they are necessary and one must know that they are false." Saurat also speaks of a new *intellectual* race at the Renaissance. The distinction between his standpoint and assumption and Sri Aurobindo's cannot be better illustrated than by quoting the latter's idea of a new race that is emerging in earth nature: "As there has been established on earth a mental Consciousness and Power which shapes a race of mental beings and takes up into itself all of earth-nature that is ready for the change, so now there will be established on earth a gnostic Consciousness and Power which will shape a race of gnostic spiritual beings and take up into itself all of earth-nature that is ready for this new transformation."

There might be a further temptation to identify the later Aurobindean verse with, say, 'pure' poetry. Now, pure poetry has been differently interpreted to mean at least two separate things—one declares the independence of the poem from its notional content and reduces it to a kind of verbal music. For instance, Housman's⁹ defence of pure lyrical poetry, of poetry "adulterated with so little meaning . . . the strong tremor of unreasonable excitement which words set up in some regions deeper than the mind." Poetry is "not the thing said but the way of saying it." The other interpretation represents the

⁹ We may note incidentally Sri Aurobindo's comment—made in a different context, on Housman's theory: ". . . . In the more deeply symbolist—still more in the mystic—poem the mind is submerged in the vividness of the reality and any mental explanation falls far short of what is felt and lived in the deeper and vital or psychic response. This is what Housman in his book tries to explain with regard to Blake's poetry, though he seems to me to miss altogether the real nature of the response. It is not the mere sensation to which what he calls pure poetry appeals but to a deeper inner life, or life-soul within us which has profounder depths than the thinking mind and responds with a certain kind of soul-excitement or ecstasy—the physical vibrations on which he lays stress are merely a very outward result of this sudden stir within the occult folds of the being."

poet as a kind of mystic *manqué*. But the notional content of Sri Aurobindo's poems is not negligible,¹⁰ indeed some consider it to be overwhelming, while his mysticism is universal as it is genuine, it has more acceptable bases of experience and is anything but *manqué*. The individual talent of the poet has replaced orthodoxy of faith by a tradition larger and more living.

Europe's spiritual centre has been profoundly stirred. Her poetry of the "winter of culture", of disintegration sees its ghostly reflection, the broken jaw of a lost kingdom in all things around. It sings of shape without form, gesture without motion, paralysed force. It is the whimper of pedants, aberrations and intellectuals, it coquets and combats with chaos. The poetry, as one of the moderns said, is in the pity but their poetry itself is sometimes a pity. This record of decay and dislocation—as of fervid experiments in technique—masks a tortured and confused seeking for integrity. In this babel Sri Aurobindo speaks a new tongue. Placed by their side he is sheer integration. If "the dominant problem in modern poetry both as a subjective concern and as revealed in its manner of expression is the problem of self-consciousness,"¹¹ the dominant theme in Sri Aurobindo's poetry is self-transcendence.

The modern mind, accustomed to listening to "jug jug to dirty ears," to seeing "Cleopatras in taxi-cabs," and to hearing "the song of Volga on Ganges' bank," will miss many of its familiar landmarks in the altitudes of Sri Aurobindo's poetry and its frequent symbolism.¹² Minor and escape poetry, abstruse and Swinburnian, would be some of the stock responses against him. There is nothing surprising in such an initial reaction, only it would be fatal if this impression were also to be final and unchanging.

¹⁰ In a letter to a disciple he had once written: "And if one were to take stock in your friend's theory (that no poem should have any philosophy, etc.) then half the world's poetry would have to disappear. Truth and Thought and Light cast into forms of beauty cannot be banished in that cavalier way. Music and art and poetry have striven from the beginning to express the vision of the deepest and greatest things and not things of the surface only, and it will be so as long as there are poetry and art and music." Quoted in *Anami*, p. 251.

¹¹ Amiya Chakravarty, *Dynasts and the Post-War Age in Poetry*, p. 3.

¹² "Symbolism is of immense importance to mysticism; indeed, symbolism and mythology are, as it were, the language of the mystic." Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, *Mysticism in English Literature*, pp. 8-9. Also, "... A symbol expresses on the contrary not the play of abstract things or ideas put into imaged form, but a living truth or inward vision or experience of things, so inward, so subtle, so little belonging to the domain of intellectual abstraction or precision that it cannot be brought out except through symbolic images—the more these images have a living truth of their own which corresponds intimately to the living truth they symbolise, suggests the very vibration of the experience itself, the greater becomes the art of the symbolic expression. ... In mystic poetry the symbol ought to be as much as possible the natural body of the inner truth or vision, itself an intimate part of the experience." Sri Aurobindo.

From the point of view of technique we might say, in the words of the poet we are discussing, that when a writer is "imposing a principle not only of rhythm but of scansion to which the ear in spite of past attempts is not trained so as to seize the basic law of the movement in all its variations, a fair amount of incomprehension, some difficulty in knowing how to read the verse is very possible."

One remembers the case of Hopkins and the early reactions to him. Even the sympathetic Bridges could not fail to point out, and feel a little apologetic about, the Oddity and Obscurity of his poetry. Though, as a later critic has wisely suggested, "What Dr. Bridges calls 'blemishes' are essential to Hopkins' aim and achievement."

Similar charges may be, and have been, levelled against Sri Aurobindo. The comparison between Hopkins and Sri Aurobindo will not, however, go very far, for their characteristic 'inscape,' to use a Hopkins expression, are quite dissimilar. The intensity of vital sensation which Hopkins, with his unconventional rhythm, conveys so admirably belongs to a region of exploration and experience which Sri Aurobindo's poetry transcends and seems almost to avoid. For instance, here is a passage from Hopkins about the uncharted and 'frightful' corners of the human psyche (so like a Roerich painting, but without its enormous calm):

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May he who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
Durance deal with that steep or deep.

This is how Sri Aurobindo, "implacable and sheer" deals with "that steep or deep,"

Above it a mountain of matted hair
Aeon-coiled on that deathless and lone head
In its solitude huge of lifeless air
Round, above illimitably spread.

(Shiva)

Yet, yoga or no yoga, the reader of poetry is justified in believing that "whatever of philosophy has been made poetry is alone permanent." It can be said that Aurobindean yogism is not quite human, clever critics might dub it anti-human rather than super-human. His most essential poetry does speak from planes which are certainly unfamiliar and seem at times to border on the incredible and hallucinatory. It is *nirvanda*, for instance. A comparison might

help. In Tagore's later poems the *Dvanda* becomes most impressive; the poems gain enormously. At the same time the readers too are more at home in the world and plane of dualities, though Tagore has his own and wins his conviction of final unity behind the play of appearances.¹³ The fact of levels of consciousness cannot be gainsaid. In Sri Aurobindo's poetry the duality is conspicuously absent. Hence the (all too human) reader is likely to feel like a stranger in going through the region of his works. This applies, of course, more to his later poems. "They are esoteric as the amazing actuality of the Aurora Borealis may be called esoteric when viewed by a traveller from southern latitudes to North Cape."¹⁴ Conflict and frustration, pain and suffering, sense-images and sense-pleasures, are normal for the earth-born. Sri Aurobindo takes his stand above the human planes of duality and conflict almost from the very beginning; at first as a metaphysical theory and latterly as realised knowledge, "the knowledge by which we become what we know." In his life too, so far as has been made available to the general public, the period of human limitations is not very evident. He has said somewhere that none but he can write his life, for it has not been on the surface for man to see. His poetry too does not hint at the *dvanda* plane of his sensibility, and he is the Rishi rather than Manu in his poem *The Rishi*. For a considerable period he remains a philosophic poet, "an idealistic sage," to use his own expression from *Essays on the Gita*, one who attempts at a cosmological criticism of life. But then, from the period of *Six Poems* onwards, he reaches Kailasa indeed, and we hear the voice of the Bard who present, past and future sees. The poet now holds Infinity in the palm of his hands and Eternity in an hour. As Dr. Iyengar puts it, "his recent poems are an attempt to achieve in English something equivalent to the *mantra*."¹⁵ But the spiritual journey itself (not without its agony and trial) must have been intricate and interesting from the human point of view. But except in some of the letters that path perilous is not referred to. Thus, in some ways, his poetry is not a complete record of his growth and personality, and, apart from the loss of manuscripts in the past, the fact of a mass of poems still unpublished makes every generalisation risky and inadequate. Is the explanation, then, of the mystery of the

¹³ See "Each plane has its own truth. . . . As we rise (higher than the mental, vital and physical Ignorance) the ego and desire appear no longer as truth, they are falsehoods disfiguring the true person and the true will. The struggle between the Powers of Light and Darkness is a truth here,—as we ascend above, it becomes less and less of a truth and in the supermind is no truth at all." *Lights on Yoga*, p. 7.

¹⁴ K. D. Sethna, *Sri Aurobindo—Poet of Yoga*. Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual. 1942.

¹⁵ Sri Aurobindo Mandir Second Annual, p. 107.

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later poems, to be sought in yoga? In a letter ("To C") he says: "I have seen both in myself and others a sudden flowering of capacities in every kind of activity come by the opening of the consciousness,—so that one who had laboured long without the least success to express himself in rhythm becomes a master of poetic language in a day."¹⁶ In another letter he gives an illustration of that sudden flowering: "That is why you got the poetic power as soon as you began Yoga—Yogic force made the passage (between the outer mind and some thing in the inner being) clear."¹⁷

He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.

says Sri Aurobindo, but without detaining himself unduly on the dolorous way—of "self-consciousness?" This creates a sense of apparent weakness and unreality in a verse otherwise so potent and perfect. He hopes "to build a rainbow bridge marrying the soil to the sky," but in his own poetry the bridge connecting the early with the later poetry is sometimes wanting!¹⁸

Eliot says somewhere that a poet is also a critic, and there is much that he leaves out of his actual writing; he also draws a distinction between the man who suffers and the mind which creates. Sri Aurobindo just drops the human and vestigial remnants of his experience, both in life and literature, transmuting them by yogic alchemy into things of beauty and bliss. As a recent reviewer puts it, "later he becomes the Poet of Yoga, and the verse becomes increasingly metaphysical (and esoteric) . . . but the wonder is that their aesthetic qualities never flag, and they never lose their complete intelligibility to the interested reader."¹⁹ This essay is addressed to the interested reader.

¹⁶ Quoted in *Anami*, p. 255.

¹⁷ Quoted in *Anami*, p. 253.

Also, "It's a decade or two that I have stopped all but the most casual reading, but my power of poetical and perfect expression has increased tenfold. What I wrote with some difficulty, I now write with ease. I am supposed to be a philosopher, but I never studied philosophy. Everything I wrote came from yogic experience, knowledge and inspiration. So my greater power over poetry and perfect expression was acquired in these last days not by reading and seeing how other people wrote, but from the heightening of my consciousness and the greater inspiration that came from the heightening." Letter dated 11.9.1934.

¹⁸ For one reason of this discontinuity see p. 2, footnotes 1 and 2.

¹⁹ William Saunders, *Peeblesshire News*, 25-4-1945.

The Aim of Integral Yoga

By PROF. HARIDAS CHAUDHURI, M.A.

The pervasive presence of evil in life is a standing challenge to the human spirit. It is so persistent, so baffling, and exists in such a huge diversity of forms! But all evils can be traced to one basic fact, and that is the separation of the finite from the Infinite, the separation of the individual from the Universal and the consequent entrenchment of the finite individual in its exclusive particularity or repellent egoism. It is, therefore, natural that the spirit's reaction to the challenge of evil should assume the form of a drive against the egoistic separation of the finite from the Infinite. Yoga represents this reaction and this drive. It means union of man with God, union of each with the All of existence, union of all with their unitary Source. It is the sovereign means of escape from the multitudinous evils of life. That which corresponds to Yoga in the West is "The Mystic Way", understood in the sense in which it has been taken by Miss Underhill. It is the path that leads to spiritual self-fulfilment, unerring vision of the Truth, and fruitful communion with the Ineffable One.

Life and Yoga.

The whole course of our life is a movement forward towards some fruition of the Infinite. It is a stream that issues from the abyss of the Inconscience, and leaps forward toward the abyss of the Superconscience. Our life is indeed the soul's pilgrimage through hills and dales to its final destiny. In other words, our whole life-process is itself a sort of Yoga, *i.e.*, an effort of the finite to be consciously united with the Infinite. Since the Infinite is already immanent in the finite, it is natural that all movements of the finite should ultimately be controlled by the purpose of the Infinite,—by its will to self-manifestation in ever novel conditions. But in ordinary life the Power of the Infinite works secretly from behind a screen, as it were, giving considerable free play to hostile forces or obstructive agencies, leaving much room for what is called finite initiative or human freewill. Consequently, the natural course of life is an extremely dilatory process, involving much unnecessary uphill labour and fruitless groping

in the dark. Yoga, strictly so called, is the resolve to allow the power of the Spirit to work more and more freely within us. While life is a slow unconscious zigzag movement in the direction secretly determined by the Spirit, Yoga is a stormy leaping forward, a saltatory ascent, to the sublime heights of spiritual fruition, conditioned by a divine re-orientation of the entire course of life. Yoga is indeed an acceleration of the *tempo* of life's progress brought about by a Copernican revolution in the field of consciousness,—by a transition from self-centredness to God-centredness, or a shifting of the centre of gravity from the ego to the Spirit. In other words, Yoga is a concentration of centuries of slow evolution into a few years of revolutionary march to capture the "Kingdom of Heaven". The essence of yoga is, as we shall see later on, conscious co-operation with the power of the Spirit, with the evolutionary impetus, or the Divine Shakti that sovereignly determines the entire stream of becoming. If the aim of Integral Yoga is complete union with the Infinite, the secret of Integral Yoga is conscious co-operation with the power of the Infinite. It is the power of the Infinite—that which has metaphorically been called the Divine Mother—that creatively sustains the stream of becoming and guides it along the lines of an increasing purpose.

Now, there are different levels of spiritual realisation, or widely divergent modes of apprehension of the Supreme and the relation of the Individual Self to the Supreme. True, the ultimate Truth is one, though the sages call it by different names (*Ekam sad viprah vahudha vadanti*). But still this one supreme Truth is not a blank featureless unity, but a manifold or multi-coloured unity, having a rich diversity of forms, aspects or poises of being. Different spiritual aspirants have approached It from different directions, differently motivated, differently equipped; they have perceived, in consequence, this or that aspect of the Infinite, this or that form of manifestation of the Supreme, in the measure of their respective capacities or degrees of receptivity. Integral realisation of the Infinite in all its aspects—total and undivided apprehension of the supreme Truth in all its richness of content—is vouchsafed only to the most heroic of the adventurous souls who have cast off all limitations and risen above all distorting media by the grace of the Divine Mother. In the history of Indian culture, one is sure to be struck by its amazing variety of spiritual experiments with the Truth; all conceivable paths have been explored in India for unravelling the mystery of existence. Hatha-yoga, Rajayoga, Karmayoga, Jnanayoga, Bhaktiyoga,—Vedantism, Vaishnavism, Tantricism including Saivism and Saktism, the Hinayana and the Mahayana of Buddhism,—are some of the most noteworthy of

such spiritual experiments. Mystics in other parts of the world—Christian mystics, Sufis, neo-Platonists, Taoists, etc.—have also treaded the path of yoga with marvellous results. Pursuing a path of gradual self-transcendence, they have been able to scale sublime heights of spiritual experience. Now, it is necessary for the highest fruition of the life of humanity that the different currents of spiritual activity should be blended together in a harmonious synthesis. Integral Yoga represents a resolute attempt to bring about this synthesis. It rests upon an integral realisation of the Supreme in all its aspects and poises of being, and it consists in making overtly operative in our life the integral Knowledge-Will or vast Truth-Consciousness of the Spirit. So it may be said that integrality of spiritual experience, integralisation of the spiritual currents of the past, and dynamisation of the integral consciousness, are the chief characteristics of that integral yoga as it has been developed by Sri Aurobindo, the great spiritual leader of modern India.

Distinctive Features of Integral Yoga.

The supreme goal which integral yoga puts before mankind may be variously described as “the flowering of the Divine in collective humanity”, “liberation *in and of* Nature, and not simply *from* Nature”, “spiritual self-manifestation as distinguished from mere self-realisation”, etc. The ancient systems of yoga in India during the period following upon the golden age of the Vedas and the Upanishads have largely been inspired by the ascetic ideal of transcendental self-realisation. Most of them have been world-renouncing and life-negating in character. They have traced the evils of our embodied existence in the world to our subjection to unconscious Nature. The manifold sufferings of our life were supposed to be conditioned by our entanglement either in the meshes of Prakriti (Samkhya), or in the meshes of Maya (Sankara Vedanta), or in the meshes of Karma (Buddhism). The supreme goal of life must therefore consist in total liberation from Nature, in complete emancipation from the fetters of Prakriti, Maya, or Karma. Since life represents in its essence the state of subjection to Nature or Nescience, complete liberation from Nature implies uncompromising renunciation of life and its activities and peaceful immersion in the “Sea Pacific” of spiritual realisation. The goal of ultimate peace has been conceived by Patanjali Yoga as “Kaivalya” which means the Self’s attainment of complete freedom from Prakriti, and from the duality of pain and pleasure ; it has been conceived by the Mayavadin as “Brahman-*laya*” or absorption in

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Brahman, which means the Self's realisation of itself as infinite existence-knowledge-bliss ; and it has been conceived by Buddhism as "Nirvana" or the blowing out of the flame of life in the "Heaven of Nothingness". So we see that it has been the main endeavour of Yogins or spiritual aspirants in mediaeval India to realise mukti or transcendental freedom by rising above the limitations of body, life and mind which are supposed to be made of some alien or illusory stuff, and to rest permanently in that state of freedom on some lofty summit of spiritual attainment.

Integral Yoga maintains that the highest goal of life is not simply the attainment of mukti or transcendental freedom, but also bhukti or free participation in the creative joy of the Spirit. It is not enough to attain self-realisation ; there is a much nobler goal of human effort, and that is to achieve self-manifestation, *i.e.*, to bring out into the world of Nature the glories of self-realisation. It is not enough to effect complete liberation from Nature ; there is a much sublimer goal of human effort, and that is to live a life of divine activity after the attainment of individual liberation, so that Nature herself can be assisted in her liberation, that is, in the complete fruition of the creative urge concealed in her bosom. Those who are enamoured of the ideal of mukti pursue a path of negation, the *via negativa* of Christian mystics; they choose to rise higher and higher until the highest point is reached from which there is no coming back. Integral yoga, however, emphasises the necessity of supplementing ascent by descent, negation by a deeper and fuller affirmation. One has surely first of all to climb the path of ascent and shoot up to the loftiest summit of spiritual experience. But if one is to participate in the creative joy of the Spirit, one has got to know how to correlate the upward movement of human aspiration with the downward movement of the dynamic Divine. Having reached the pinnacle of supramental realisation, the integral yogin is again to descend; he is to come back to the point of his departure, namely, to the physical consciousness, and he is to bring down there the light and power of the supramental Truth-Consciousness. The aim of the integral yogin is to make the supermind overtly operative in our life and to make it a permanent ingredient in the earth-consciousness. Ascent and descent are then two inseparable aspects of the movement of integral yoga ; they are the systol and diastole of integral sadhana. "Our yoga", says Sri Aurobindo, "is a double movement of ascent and descent ; one rises to higher and higher levels of consciousness, but at the same time one brings down their power not only into mind and life, but in the end even into the body. And the highest of these levels, the one at which it aims is the

Supermind. Only when that can be brought down is a divine formation possible in the earth-consciousness."¹

The followers of the exclusive path of ascent look upon the path of body, life and mind as forming a ladder which has got to be used for climbing up to the summit of spiritual experience, but after the highest point is attained it has to be kicked aside. There arises the question of keeping tied to the ladder or climbing down it occasionally and temporarily for showing other people the way to use it properly. For integral yoga, body, life and mind are not simply means of climbing up to the highest peak, but also means of bringing down below the peak, expressing here the glories of the highest. They are not to be treated as a mere ladder but must be prepared as instruments of divine action on earth, or as media of self-manifestation of the Spirit in matter, in order that they may function as transparent media of self-manifestation of the Spirit, integral yoga insists that the dynamic Truth-Consciousness should be made operative in all of them, so that all the parts of our existence including even the lowest, namely, the subconscious physical frame, may undergo a complete divine or supramental transformation. It is this integral divine transformation of our embodied existence which is the unique characteristic and distinguishing feature of integral yoga,—the characteristic that marks it off from all other systems of spiritual discipline. True, there is an adumbration of the twin movements of ascent and descent in Christian mysticism. It has been said that 'the ascent of the Christian celebrant is made only that he may descend again and distribute the light he has received to his fellow-men'. "The mystic," says Ruysbroeck, "must go up and down the ladder of contemplation: his fruition of Reality must evoke a complementary impulse of charity to all the world".² But while the Christian mystic could think only of coming down with some light from above for mystic distribution thereof below, the aim of integral yoga is to bring down for overt operation in the evolving world-matter the highest creative power of the Spirit, the dynamic Truth-Consciousness itself, and to make it a permanent ingredient of our existence. This is to be done exactly in the way in which the mind has been made an ingredient of the earth-consciousness by the evolutionary effort of Nature. Moreover, the twin movements of ascent and descent as involved in integral yoga are movements up and down, not so much as the ladder of contemplation or love, as the ladder built by the surrender and Grace—a self-surrender that lifts man above the mortal level, and a divine Grace that makes the superconscious divine energy (the Divine Mother) fully operative in the human mould. Full

¹ *The Riddle of this World*, pp. 2-3.

² Evelyn Underhill's *The Mystic Way*, p. 366.

more, by the divine transformation of human nature integral yoga means not merely a divine orientation of human consciousness or a remaking of human personality—his inner character—according to the likeness of God, but a complete supramental transformation and a consequent immortalisation of even the most inconscient part of his existence, the body.

The first distinguishing feature of integral yoga is, as we have seen, a complete change of being, a total conversion of consciousness, not a mere perception of the Spirit, however luminous. This change or conversion is to be effected by the sovereign dynamism of the Spirit. Besides self-realisation, integral yoga aims at self-manifestation and self-perfection, *i.e.*, a complete divine transfiguration of all the parts of embodied existence and a superb expression of the glories of the Spirit in Life. This self-perfection and self-manifestation is to be effected by establishing the Supermind in our waking consciousness, or, by what Sri Aurobindo has called “a waking union with the Divine”. Ancient Indian yogins were mainly attracted by what is known as Samadhi or spiritual trance. Samadhi represents an exalted state of union or identity with the Spirit, obtained by leaving far behind the physical consciousness. Samadhi seems discontinuous with the waking consciousness, and can therefore be attained only by abrogating the latter. It resembles the state of sleep in so far as the yogin in trance appears for all practical purposes lost to the physical world; he is precluded from the bodily activities of waking life so long as the trance lasts. Integral yoga, however, stands for open-eyed samadhi, *i.e.*, attainment of integral union with the Divine in the heart of the physical consciousness and amid the flood of physical activity. It is what the Gita has described as “Brahmsthiti”, which far from being detrimental to the interests of practical life is the mainspring and support of a life of incessant divine works. The only difference is that while with Sri Krishna “Brahmsthiti” was an illuminated life of activity from the Overmental consciousness, integral yoga aspires after a thoroughly transfigured life of activity from the Supramental consciousness. The second important characteristic which differentiates integral yoga from ancient systems of yoga in India is that it is not simply concerned with the spiritual liberation of individuals but sincerely believes in the collective liberation of the human race. While ancient masters laid stress upon individuals crossing the threshold of timeless existence in increasing numbers, integral yoga holds up the vision of a unique variation of the human species, an undreamt-of mutation of the collective consciousness of mankind, a “saltatory ascent” of the Life-Force or *elan vital* whose creative urge has been brought to a focus in the human aspiration for a unique World Order. “The flowering

of the Divine in collective humanity", the manifestation of the glories of the Spirit on earth, the emergence of the Divine Man or Superman,—that is the controlling vision of integral yoga. The yogins of ancient India were animated by the ideal of transcendental liberation. Having attained it they looked upon our life in the world as at best a pointless sojourn in the dark and dreary land of Ignorance, and at worst a terrible nightmare. The idea of divine transformation of terrestrial existence did not occur to them. They were somehow convinced that our life was made of the stuff of which dreams are made or was fashioned from an absolutely alien principle. It would perhaps be too much to level against them any sweeping charge of individualism or spiritual gluttony. When they condescended to work in the practical field or on the material plane, they were surely actuated by the best of altruistic motives. All their actions were calculated to provide for other people an escape from the meshes of life. Their active life was indeed in the nature of an energetic protest against the futility of all action except that which leads to its final negation in nirvana. But the whole perspective is entirely changed for Integral Idealism. It calls our attention to the deep significance of life. Integral Yoga urges upon us to join forces with the creative effort of Nature, and to participate in the creative delight of the Spirit. It recommends active life as a form of conscious co-operation with the Divine Will. It lays the greatest emphasis upon the need of dynamising the Truth-Consciousness in all the details of our actual living. It aims at incarnating the Eternal in the temporal, the Spirit in matter, the ineffable Divine within the framework of Here-and-Now. The vision of Supermanhood is the concrete shape which this aim of Integral Yoga assumes.

But it may be asked here, Is the ideal of Divine Humanity a unique contribution of Purna Yoga? Do we not come across the same ideal in other ages and in other countries? Surely the ideal is not altogether new. In the Vedic Ages, we come across the idea of Divine Birth in man. The inspired seers of the Vedas prayed to the gods that they might descend into the different members of their being, and enrich them by divine light and power. In the Puranas, we come across the idea of Satyayuga, *i.e.*, the Kingdom of Truth in the world. The Gita was inspired by the ideal of Dharmarajya, *i.e.*, the Reign of Righteousness. In Christianity, there is the vision of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, though a too much subjectivist interpretation has often been given to the notion of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Jewish Prophets used to speak of the City of God (*Civitas Deus*). Hermetic philosophers or spiritual alchemists dreamed the dream of "spiritual gold" or divine humanity representing spirit

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and body indissolubly knit together by the soul.³ "Eternal life in the midst of time",—that is, as Harnack tells us, the secret of Christianity. Now, this ideal of Eternal Life in the midst of time or the Kingdom of Truth in the world, receives in Integral Yoga its ultimate rationale and completeness of form. Moreover, Integral Yoga brings that ideal within a measurable distance of actual achievement by discovering the immense possibilities of the Supramental Truth-Consciousness, which is the sovereign dynamism of the Spirit. It is our firm conviction that the ideal of supermanhood is not a mere yearning of the human spirit, "gay in the sunshine but broken by the passing wind", but a reflection in the human consciousness of the ultimate intention of evolutionary Nature. Since, then, Supermanhood is decreed to be the inevitable outcome of the evolutionary endeavour of Nature, it is easily understandable why Purna Yoga should lay the greatest emphasis upon man's active participation in the creative impetus inherent in the world-process. Indeed, the very essence of Purna Yoga lies in dynamic self-identification with the superconscient creative Power of the Supreme—the Divine Mother as Sri Aurobindo metaphorically calls it—who is constantly guiding from behind the scene the course of the evolution of Nature and Man. If yoga literally means union, Integral Yoga is taken in its essence as man's conscious union or co-operation with the Dynamic Divine. Purna Yoga holds that the ideal of divine humanity can be brought to fruition neither by the religious sentiment of love nor by the moral force of non-violence, but by transcending the furthest outskirts of the mental region and by energising the supramental Real-Idea. But this requires man's sincere aspiration from below and the Mother's Grace from above.

In actual practice, the implicit conviction that guides the spiritual seeker after Truth is what may be put as: Heaven is Heaven, Earth is Earth, and the twain shall never meet. The dominant impulse in the civilisation of the East has been the realisation of "Heaven" or transcendental spiritual freedom on the basis of an ascetic denial of matter and all mundane interests. As a consequence, a high degree of inwardness, an extraordinary measure of spiritual excellence, has been accompanied by a marked deterioration in the sphere of social organisation and scientific development. The key-note of Western civilisation has been, on the contrary, an excessive pre-occupation with the demands of "Earth" or material living. The genius of the West is to be seen shining in such things as scientific marvels, technological advancement, industrial revolution, political organisation, etc. But

³ *Underhill's Mysticism*, p. 142.

as a result of its comparative indifference to the higher values of life, as a result of its relative deafness to the call of the Spirit, Western civilisation contains the seeds of self-destruction. It frequently gets involved in mutual destructiveness, and finds itself in the shallow waters of mechanisation and regimentation of life. What is essentially needed to save mankind from recurrent catastrophies and to put it on the triumphant march to its noblest destiny, is a harmonious fusion of the cultural ideals of the East and the West. The structure of outward living has got to be adjusted to the potent call of the Spirit. The needs of social organisation have got to be correlated with the secret purpose of cosmic evolution. The marvels of science and technology have got to be pressed into the service of the Divine Will to self-manifestation in material conditions. The members of our embodied existence have got to be transfigured in the light of the supreme Truth that enfolds in its vision both the dynamis of life and the silence of the Spirit. And all these are to be done in a spirit of profound self-fulfilment. For, to fulfil the Truth in life is to fulfil the Self, and to fulfil the purpose of social organisation. The supreme cultural synthesis which is devoutly to be wished for is to be sought on some such lines. Integral Idealism which looks upon the world as the rhythmic manifestation of the Spirit, and regards Nature and Life as a progressive effort to incarnate the Spirit in Matter, provides the intellectual foundation of this synthetic ideal of life.

Romain Rolland who had a very deep understanding of Indian culture paid a sincere tribute to Sri Aurobindo when he remarked that he was the completest synthesis up to this day of the genius of Europe and the genius of Asia. Ascetic denial of matter characteristic of the East, and materialistic preoccupation with the here-and-now characteristic of the West, are each corrected and fulfilled in the all-embracing movement of Integral Yoga. Integral Yoga provides indeed a meeting-ground of the East and the West, so far as the fundamental trends of culture and the deeper stirrings of life are concerned. It aims at the complete spiritual transformation of our life within the framework of here-and-now. It is opposed to the idea of renouncing any interest of life or any branch of human activity, as much as it denounces one's egoistic preoccupation with life's affairs. It stands for a deeper affirmation of life on the basis of an uncompromising negation of whatever comes from Ignorance. The ideal of all-transcending freedom (*mukti*) is perfectly blended in it with that of all-embracing harmony; profoundest self-realisation is reconciled with the widest capacity of unfettered self-expression; the spirit of dynamic activity is saturated with spirituality of the purest and loftiest order. All the sides and interest of our life receive their due emphasis in

Purna Yoga. The multifarious activities of life obtain a unique re-orientation, and the whole pattern of living is informed by a new transvaluation of values. And all this done not by compromising the demands of the Spirit, but by carrying spirituality to its highest term of development. That which is responsible for the backwardness of India in the fields of Economics and Politics—her backwardness in respect of social organisation and scientific development—is not her excess of spirituality, but inadequacy and onesidedness of spirituality. During the Middle ages, which represent a certain stage in the history of spiritual unfoldment in India, the best brains used to withdraw from the arena of active social life for silent and exclusive concentration upon the transcendental poise of the Spirit. This was perhaps a historical necessity, a step in the process of eventual attainment of integral spirituality. The necessity had indeed to be fulfilled at a great cost. The natural sequel to exclusive concentration upon the transcendental aspect of the Spirit was deplorable backwardness in the sphere of political organisation, industrial progress, and technological development. But still that static and transcendental realisation was the *sine qua non* of a fuller and integral realisation, in the fullness of time, of the Spirit as both static and dynamic, and as at once supra-cosmic, cosmic and individual. Such integral realisation would imply not impoverishment of life in any direction, but its all-round enrichment, its splendid reconstruction by means of the dynamic Truth-Consciousness. Integral Yoga is the art of living to the full a life of the Spirit. It is the art of building immortal life on earth. It is the technique of bringing to harmonious fruition the divergent currents of spiritual activity in the past.

Synthetic Character of Intègral Yoga

Some Yogins have laid emphasis upon purification (suddhi) and supernormal achievement (siddhi). Their central aspiration has been to free the body from all impurities and obstructiveness to the smooth flow of vital energy, so that they may acquire thereby supernormal or supernatural powers, and eventually to attain a state of perfect quiet and equipoise, far above all life's perturbations and sufferings. Belief in God is no indispensable factor in such systems of yoga. The follower of Hathayoga, who is too much occupied with suddhi and siddhi, tends oftner than not to lose sight of the main objective of mukti. Exposed to the allurements of vital satisfaction, he stands in great danger of being swept along on the tide of inflated egoism. Rajayoga shifts its attention from the physical-vital to the mental, and

is quite fully aware of the subordination of everything else to the goal of mukti conceived as liberation from lower nature. But still Rajayoga also is mainly mechanical in character, and since it holds out to the mind no inspiring vision of the supreme Godhead, it can put no effective safeguards against the dangers inherent in Hathayoga. Its main attraction is the possibility of a life greater and vaster, free from the fetters of material embodiment, but not the call of a life better and nobler, where self-sacrifice counts more than self-assertion and self-surrender counts more than self-satisfaction. As a consequence, it can furnish no strength to stem the tide of spiritual degeneration brought about by inflated egotism. Here also, as in Hathayoga, the attractive notion of siddhi tends to come to the front, and put into the shade the ultimate goal of mukti. Followers of the triple path of Works, Knowledge and Love—Karmayoga, Jnanayoga and Bhaktiyoga—deliberately eschew all manner of psycho-physical gymnastic, look with fear and suspicion upon siddhi in the sense of supernormal achievement, and concentrate their attention upon the ideal of mukti conveyed as union with the Divine. The ideal of mukti however presents itself under different forms to the different schools of the Triple Path. For the Karmayogin the highest spiritual fulfilment is in the nature of sādrishya or sādharmya mukti, which means union with the Divine in His dynamic law of action,—a growth into an image or likeness of the Godhead. For the Jnanayogin, the highest spiritual fulfilment is in the nature of sajuja mukti, which means union with the Divine, in His static poise or immutable being, realisation of His pure undifferentiated consciousness, absorption in His unfathomable abyss. For the Bhaktiyogin, the highest spiritual fulfilment is in the nature of sālōkya or sāmīpya mukti, which means living permanently with God in His own abode or plane of consciousness, abiding enjoyment of His presence through love and adoration. Rapturous communion with the Divine, not cold immersion in His immovable calm, drinking deep at the ultimate source of all joy and beauty, and not awestruck contemplation of the naked Godhead or self-dissolution in His dazzling effulgence,—that is the goal which Bhaktiyoga sets before itself. The notion of mukti is supplemented in Bhaktiyoga by that of bhukti, which connotes an ecstatic participation in the sportive activity of the Lord, and not a mere colourless state of absorption in Brahman. Purnyoga, however, points out that there exists no essential opposition between sālōkya mukti, sājuja mukti and sādharmya mukti. Integral Union with the supreme Godhead includes union with Him in His dynamic law of action (sādharmya), union with Him in His immutable being as pure consciousness (sājuja), and also union with Him in His sportive activity or in His expansive urge of love and delight (sālōkya

mukti or bhukti). Integral Yoga further maintains that it is not only mukti in the triple form including bhukti, but also suddhi and siddhi that must be accepted as essential elements in the ultimate goal of life. Since Purnayoga strives to bring down the Divine Power for overt operation in the body, it requires kāyāsuddhi or purification of the physical apparatus. The physical apparatus has got to be purified not simply to the extent of making it fit as a spring-board for one's transcendental flight towards mukti; through complete purgation it has to be turned into a vehicle of Divine puissance; and eventually through supramental transformation it has to be converted into a perfect image of divine glory. Purnayoga does not adopt an attitude of shrinking recoil from siddhi or attainment of supernormal powers, because it aims not only at the realisation of the supreme Truth but at the establishment of the Kingdom of Truth on earth. The right use of divine powers or supernormal forces is imperatively needed in laying the foundation of the Kingdom of Truth by a conquest of the forces of darkness or nescience. Purnayoga points out that what degrades, corrupts or leads astray is not Power in itself, but the egoistic use of Power, or vital attachment thereto; the right use of Power consists in employing it in a spirit of selfless devotion to the service of the Divine Will. Thus we see that the essence of Purnayoga lies in a harmonious adjustment of the four supreme ends—suddhi and siddhi, mukti and bhukti. It calls for suddhi or complete purification of body, life and mind not only for the individual's ascent to spiritual liberation but also for the descent into his instrumental being of the Divine Power. It looks upon mukti or liberation as an essential preliminary to the individual's active participation in the creative urge of God; and it accepts siddhi or possession of divine powers as a necessary aid to the fulfilment of the Divine Will in the world.

The Tāntrikas have evolved what is known as Kundali Yoga, and it has been claimed that Kundali Yoga enjoys some definite points of superiority over the other systems of yoga including the method of the Vedantins. First, Kundali Yoga is believed to be an amazingly swift and sure process of attaining liberation; it enables one to "seize the Kingdom of Heaven by storm" as it were. The followers of Vaidantic Yoga have to depend for spiritual realisation upon their individual jnanashakti, upon their own powers of non-discrimination and detachment (viveka and vairāgya), their own powers of concentration and meditation (dhyāna and dhāraṇā), and so their achievement is conditioned and limited by this circumstance. The secret of Kundali Yoga lies in awakening the Kundalini Shakti, the coiled Serpent Power, sleeping or lying dormant at the base of the spinal chord. The Kundalini has been said to function as the positive

nucleus of the negatively charged vital energies (prāṇic forces) in the body. The Kundalini is supposed to be the primal shakti; once she is awakened, spiritual progress is accelerated, expectation, and she produces in a short time full jnana or knowledge for the sadhaka. Secondly, the Tantrikas claim that Kundalini not only accelerates the speed of spiritual progress, but can lead to a more complete union with ultimate Reality than Vaidantic Yoga can attain. In Kundali Yoga, Samadhi or ecstatic fusion with the Absolute is mediated by the central power of the individual (jiva), a power which carries with it the forces of body, life and mind, and not attained by the mental force of meditation. The union which is thus achieved is consequently more complete than that achieved by the ordinary methods only. Though in both the cases bodily consciousness is present in Kundali Yoga not only the mind but the body in so far as it is represented by its central Power, (or, may be, by an efflux of that power) is actually united with the unchanging Spirit (Siva) at the summit of the nervous system (sahasrara).³ In the third place, Kundali Yoga claims to produce not only mukti or freedom from Ignorance but also bhukti and siddhi. When the awakened consciousness gets united with the supreme spirit in the sahasrara, there is generated the "nectar" of supernal bliss that inundates the entire body of the sadhaka, and the latter comes to possess an abundance of supernatural powers (siddhi). Finally, Tantrika sadhana does not aim at the transcendental realisation of the Spirit, but involves an attempt to submerge the lower vital nature and to impress upon it the values of the Spirit.⁴

All the above-mentioned points of advantage which Tantrika sadhana claims to enjoy receive particular emphasis in Purna Yoga and obtain a new depth of significance. Purna Yoga is awakened because there is an immense acceleration of the tempo of spiritual progress if the individual's own effort or tapasya is completely replaced by the Divine Sakti. It looks upon sadhana as essentially the work of the Divine, and so realises the necessity of entrusting the entire process to the Divine. But Purna Yoga recommends gradual discriminating replacement of individual effort by the Divine. For, otherwise, if such replacement takes place before the lower nature has been completely purified, there is great danger of one's falling into the grip of subterranean forces. But the Divine Sakti to which the Purna Yogin appeals and surrenders himself is not so much the sleeping Kundalini that lies in potentia at the base of the spinal

³ *Shakti and Shakta*, by Arthur Avalon, p. 428.

⁴ *The Renaissance in India*, by Sri Aurobindo, p. 21.

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the superconscient Divine Mother who is ever awake and who is used to dwell above the top of the cerebrum. In consequence, the initial aim is not so much the rousing of the Kundalini by a concentrated pressure of the vital energies upon the mulādhāra (the base of the spinal chord), as the bringing into the front of the psychic that presents the luminous presence of the Divine within the individual. A psychic awakening would be the first and most important step towards the noblest fruition of the Divine in man. In regard to union with the Divine, we know that Purna Yoga insists upon making this an absolute and integral. Though Kundali Yoga lays much stress upon the meeting of the awakened central Power with the supreme consciousness at the sahasrara—and this amounts to realising the union on the plane of the spiritualised mind—such meeting is on its admission a kind of sleeping union with the Divine. With regard to the Kundalini, it has been said: "When Kundali 'sleeps', man is shut out to this world; when she 'awakes' he sleeps, that is, loses all consciousness of the world and enters his causal body. In yoga he goes beyond to formless consciousness."⁵ Mother Kali is said to transcend his consciousness of time (kāla). Purna Yoga, however, aspires to achieve a union with the Divine in full integrality, in His timeless spiritual experience in complete detachment from all worlds of forms, in His universality creatively sustaining endless worlds of forms, and in His poise of being as the presiding Principle of an evolving individual. And this integral union is sought to be achieved not on the basis of abrogation of the consciousness of the world of space, time and form, but amid the waking consciousness with which this world is continuous. Moreover, such an integral union can be had not on the plane of the spiritualised mind, but on the plane of the supermind; not at the sahasrara, the top of the cerebrum, but by means of an overhead ascension". Furthermore, we have seen that, like Kundali Yoga, Purna Yoga also strives after bhukti and siddhi in addition to jnana. But it is important to note that the words ('bhukti' and 'siddhi'), bear in Purna Yoga a much deeper meaning. Bhukti means not simply silent rapturous communion with the Spirit, but also active participation in His delight of increasing self-manifestation on the earth. Finally, Purna Yoga strives not only to lift up the lower nature, but to bring down the Divine Consciousness into the lower nature. If in Kundali Yoga the lower nature is caught up to a thrilling union with the Divine, in Purna Yoga it is made to undergo a thorough transformation. Not a mere upward orientation of the entire nature, but a real transfiguration thereof, is the aim of the

Vaisnavism and Purna Yoga

The idea of bhukti has been carried to a higher degree of elevation in Vaisnavism than in Tantricism. The Vaisnavas look at the ideas of siddhi and mukti. Siddhi is in their view a hindrance in the path of spiritual progress; and mukti has a selfish motivation. For the Vaisnavas, the Spirit is in its essence Prema (Love). So the finest flower of spiritual development of which man is capable must be love. The purest response of the human soul to the call of the Spirit is devotion (bhakti), which is consummated in love. The essence of love is free self-donation and unreserved self-giving. So the highest form of self-fulfilment consists not in a spirit of appropriation of the nectar of superna but in a spirit of unreserved self-giving to the Divine, in an attitude of complete self-subordination to the fruition of the supreme Love. A true vaisnava is one who is eager to give his all to the Lord, and without the least hope of return; what he receives is a by-product of his unmotivated love or self-giving (ahetuki or akaitava prema). Again, Vaisnavism invites man not simply to an absorption in the Absolute of immutable being as Vedantism does, but to an active participation in the delight of divine dalliance, in the joyous association with the Lord in His cosmic play. Finally, Vaisnavism makes a special endeavour to lift up the affective or emotional nature of man. It seeks the highest intensity of spiritual love, to associate common feelings and sentiments with deep spiritual experiences, and to give a spiritual orientation to the ordinary human relationships. This amounts to the bringing of God very near to the human heart, and making spiritual life continuous with the emotional susceptibilities of human nature.

Purna Yoga is in perfect agreement with Vaisnavism where the latter holds that ungrudging self-donation, not selfish appropriation, is the essence of love, and, in consequence, the secret of deepest spiritual life. But the defect of Vaisnavism arises from the exaggerated emphasis which it lays in practice upon the element of love. Since knowledge and wisdom and power are inseparable moments in the nature of the Supreme, love can hardly be dissociated from knowledge and spiritual works. Love must function as the connecting link not only between soul and soul or between soul and God, but also between knowledge and works, or between transcendent peace and unwearied labour. Knowledge is the soul and support of genuine love, and self-less love is the fruit thereof. In order to prevent the gospel of love degenerating into morbid sentimentalism, Purna Yoga makes knowledge central in our life; and in order to prevent it being reduced to private devotion with the Divine or idle basking in the sunshine of Divine love.

Yoga insists upon activity as the surest sign of truest love. Love is Purna Yoga not a mere passive self-giving to the pleasure of the individual, but an active self-surrender to His Will. Knowledge inspires and justifies this active self-surrender, and divine works freely flow out in a spontaneous stream. When love is viewed in its true dimensions, the need is sure to be felt of a divine transformation not only of our feelings and emotions but also of our thought and will.

Then again, though Purna Yoga much appreciates the Lord's insistence on active participation in the delight of becoming, it warns us against any onesidedness in this also. It urges the necessity of combining the unvarying nature of impersonal Being (Nirguṇa Brahman) with the ever-changing delight of associating with the personal Lord (Saguṇa Brahman) in His cosmic play. An integral openness to the static and dynamic poises of consciousness is indeed the supreme desideratum. Hence, Purna Yoga holds that the highest ideal for the finite soul is association as the Playmate of the Divine not only on supraphysical planes of consciousness but also in the physical world or on the material plane.

The burning passion of the Purna Yogin is to associate with the Lord not only in the game of love or in celestial dalliance, but in the most terrific battlefield of life in the world, in the severest struggle with the forces of darkness and evil. By the delight of becoming, Purna Yoga means not only the delight of sportive activity in typical non-evolutionary spheres of existence, but that of God's increasing manifestation in and through the evolution of material Nature. Hence, there is another important difference between Vaisnavism and Purna Yoga. Vaisnavism has indeed largely contributed to the uplift or sublimation of the lower vital nature by trying to associate with it all manner of inner psychic experiences. Purna Yoga points out that what is essentially needed for a divine pattern of life is not a mere association of the spiritual consciousness with the lower nature, but a complete spiritual and supramental transformation of the vital. Vaisnavism takes the vital emotions and gives them a spiritual content; it takes the vital relations as they are, and gives them a spiritual orientation. Now this contains the possibility as much of spiritual uplift as of spiritual deterioration and self-deception. This is evident from a study of the later phases of the history of the spiritual movement. In one of his letters written to a disciple in November, 1931, Sri Aurobindo says, "The application of the unaged vital relation to the embodied Divine may lead and has led to movements which are not conducive to the progress of the yoga".

Purna Yoga insists upon a complete neutralisation of the downward pull of the lower vital nature by means of the Supermind Power. And

this is to be done in a way which would give the lower vital a deeper self-fulfilment.

Thus we see that Integral Yoga provides in respect of its object a synthesis of Vedantism, Vaisnavism and Tantricism. It is in its aspiration the ideals of suddhi, siddhi, mukti and bhukti, the ideals of purity, power, liberation and supernal bliss. Complete purification of the instrumental being and employment of supernatural power in the interest of divine self-manifestation are treated as essential pre-requisites of the attainment of divine life. It envisages mukti in its full depth of significance. Besides liberation from the bonds of lower nature or nescience, mukti connotes for it union with the Divine in all His various aspects,—union with God in His immutable being (sājujya), in His mutable becoming (sādhya) and in His private dalliance (sāmipya). The ideal of bhukti undergoes an enlargement of meaning. It does not simply signify rapturous communion with the Divine, or a free access to the experience of supernal bliss, but also an active participation in the delight of God's evolutionary self-manifestation in material conditions. The ideal of self-realisation figures in Integral Yoga as a means to that of self-manifestation. The ideal of self-perfection figures in it as a means to that of collective outflowering. The ideal of spiritual emancipation from Nature figures in it as a means to that of divine transformation of Nature.

Akbar the Unifier

BY SISIRKUMAR MITRA

Akbar represents the acme of the political endeavours of the Muslims in India ; and the success that attended his sincere and earnest efforts to build a happy and united India was largely due to the kingly virtues he possessed and brought to bear on the ways in which he tried to accomplish his great work. Rarely has a king had such a lofty and comprehensive vision as inspired Akbar ; and never was a king so eminently capable of translating his vision into such a splendid series of radical acts. A unique personality, Akbar stands out as "one of the wisest, most humane and most cultured of all the kings known to history". It is not for us to crab and carp at his political career or merely to single out his defects and shortcomings in order to pass a summary verdict of failure on him, as has sometimes been done by narrow historical criticism ; nor is it our aim to study him with a mind biased by considerations which are outside the scope of impartial history. No doubt accuracy demands a searching enquiry into all the problems which are associated with his rule, and even a dissecting analysis of the motives that actuated his policies and measures, but what is of paramount importance is that the attention of the historian must be focussed not upon the side-issues and stray events but upon the central drift and significance of his life and work, the cardinal conception and creation of his administrative genius—the political and cultural unification of India. Akbar stands or falls upon this single bed-rock fact of his reign.

Akbar in the outer expression of his nature was first and foremost an empire-builder : but in the inmost core of his being he was a seeker, and his seeking deepened with age and persisted through life, possibly because he never reached the end of it. It cannot be gainsaid that he was the architect of a vast empire, a tireless promoter of human fellowship, the inaugurator of an era of remarkable cultural activity ; but history says very little about the 'inner man' in Akbar, his characteristic cast and insistent creative impulse. The religious reforms that he tried to introduce are generally interpreted either as expressions of his earnest desire to bring about a religious synthesis or as his deliberate intention to shake into sense the orthodox canonists of Islam who felt very much scandalised and shamed by Akbar's open-hearted acceptance of truth from whatever source it came to him. But these do not take us deep enough into the inner working of Akbar's nature, a revealing glimpse of which, however, we get in the following incident. When he was a mere boy of fourteen, one day he suddenly left the splendours of the Imperial Camp and, unnoticed by any body, rode out all alone into a vast wilderness. After a while, when his *entourage* missed him, search parties went out in all directions. One of these noticed the boy-emperor's favourite horse, Hamid, quietly grazing on a plot of grass at a distance. The day-light was failing.

The party searched all around and at last found the emperor on his knees, gazing at the vast open space in front of him with tears streaming from his eyes. They could obtain no explanation from the emperor why he had strayed away from the Camp, but only succeeded in persuading him to return to his anxious family and bewildered guests.

This was not the only instance of Akbar's love of solitude and his contemplation of God and Nature. Abul Fazl says that Akbar used to pass the morning alone in meditation "sitting on a large flat stone in an old building which lay near the palace in a lonely spot, with his head bent over his chest and gathering the bliss of the early hours." When he reached his twentieth year Akbar confessed that his soul was filled with exceeding sorrow from the consciousness that he "lacked spiritual strength for the journey of life." "Although I am the master of so vast a realm and all the appliances of government are in my hands, yet, since my greatness consists in doing the will of God, my mind is not at all divided by this diversity of sects and creeds ; and apart from this outward circumstance, with what satisfaction in my despondency can I undertake the sway of the empire? I await the coming of some wise man of whom I will resolve the difficulties of my conscience." It is obvious that Akbar was in search of a spiritual guide. He met many philosophers, thinkers, scholars, Hindu, Muslim, Jain and Christian ; but none of them, it seems, could give him that light, that spiritual pabulum, his soul was hungering for.

Perhaps Akbar was aiming at something which he was not able to receive, preoccupied as he was by various interests of a mundane and distracting nature. Nevertheless, his hours of meditation, his contemplative turn of mind and his thirst for truth enabled him to a large extent to control the adverse circumstances in which he found himself. He was not free from the influence of the rationalism which was prevalent over the world in the sixteenth century. But in him very much more than in his great contemporaries, Peter of Russia, Elizabeth of Russia and Henry IV of France, it was religious urge that guided the emperor in his action. And it was this again that helped him to transcend the limitations that was rampant all over Europe in the wars of religion and in the fanaticism of saints. On the whole Akbar's signal successes overshadowed his failures ; and it is always the calm, noble and grand monarch that appears to our vision most prominently. It was an era of great monarchs in which Akbar lived, and our minds naturally run to a comparison between him and the maker of Russia or between him and the founder of Protestant England. This comparison is justifiable from an international point-of-view, but for a proper understanding of the philosophy of Indian history it is necessary that the student should dig beneath the surface and appraise the inner man in Akbar.

Like so many other great figures in history, Akbar was moulded more by his heritage and environments than by the native fire of his soul. And yet heredity and environments had not an inconformative influence upon his life and character. A descendant of a lion-hearted Babar was bound to be a great soldier ; the ward of the great Bairam Khan, to be a noted statesman ; the son of the brother of Humayun—the Rakhi-brother of a Rajput princess—to be an international cosmopolitan ; and the beloved grandchild of the wise Gulbadan, to be an expert reader of human nature. The son of a Shia mother, t

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Fazl and Faizi, the beloved master of such widely differing abilities as Birbal, Mansingh, and Todar Mall, the patron of Tansen, hardly be a bigoted Sunni. All these influences worked in Akbar to him to formulate a policy of expansion and conciliation by one or otherwise, which was at least as successful as a similar policy of the contemporary house of the Hapsburgs. But Akbar was greater than the Hapsburgs; for the Hapsburgs' conciliation and alliance was strictly limited to the Catholic world while Akbar's undoubted toleration was based on an integral view of humanity, however vague it might be. Akbar owed much to these facts about his life and heritage; his impartial attitude towards all was not a little the outcome of a cumulative effect on his character. In matters of religion this in the virtue of the emperor rose to its supreme height. He issued a declaration that there should be no interference with any one's convictions, and that in the matter of worship utmost freedom should be allowed to non-Muslims. Thus while Catholics were murdering Protestants in France, and Protestants under Elizabeth were murdering Catholics in England, and the Inquisition was killing and robbing Jews, and Bruno was being burnt at the stake in Italy, Akbar invited representatives of all the religions in his empire to a conference, called them to peace, and issued edicts of toleration for every cult and used as an evidence of his own equality himself took part in the festivities of the Hindus as well as in those of the Muslims. His pleasure was in the free discussion of religious beliefs, and to this he traced "his unwillingness from the outset to accept the theory of the cause he, the conqueror, the ruler, happened to be born a Muhammadan, therefore Muhammadanism was true for all mankind. Only his thoughts found words in the utterance: 'Why should I guide men before I myself am guided?' and as he listened to doctrines and other creeds, his honest doubts became confirmed, finding daily the bitter narrowness of sectarianism, no matter of what religion, he became more and more wedded to the principle of unity for all."

In the debates organised under the auspices of Akbar's court, the representatives of various religious sects, each trying to prove the superiority of his own faith, exhibited their own passions in wordy outbursts, the emptiness of which was too glaring for the emperor to bear. Within his heart that with such differences bordering on mutual hostility there could be no collective progress among his people, no peace. He knew that all religions have their own kernel of truth, but what he could not understand was the dry, dogmatic intellectualism and polemical perversions into which they had lapsed in his days. As at heart, he was pained by the bitter wrangles of their orthodoxes. It was a new, wide and impartial outlook, the emperor thought, by which one could liberate man from the cramping bounds of narrow sectarianism. A common path for all must therefore be explored which would lead man to the truth that unity and solidarity are indispensable to the growth of a vigorous national life. While he was immersed in these thoughts there came to the vision of Akbar a light that, he thought, would dispel the darkness by which he was surrounded on all sides. He realised that it was the king who could really be the symbol of national unity, the living and focussing centre of all the co-ordinated interests and

activities of a nation's life. Loyalty to the king, he felt, would prepare and perfect the people's loyalty to harmony and unity and a concordant mutuality in the country.

It was this conception that took shape in his mind in what the emperor promulgated as *Din-i-Ilahi* or the Divine Faith. It was like an order whose members were required to be always ready to sacrifice all they were and all they had for the Padshah who was regarded as their sole protector. Thus the Divine Faith, which included the truths of various religions, assured that honour should be rendered to God, peace be given to the people and security to the empire. The conception was indeed grand, and whatever its practical application, it cannot be said that it proved a complete failure. Unity, which was Akbar's aim, could come only when, as he believed, allegiance to a great ideal was rendered in common by the people. And he tried to incarnate this ideal in himself by assuming the leadership of the people. The idea was that the people, irrespective of their creed or race, should, by dedicating themselves to the Order and through that to its supreme head, the emperor, feel united by the same community of interests, the same ideals and aspirations, the same principles for the guidance of their inner and outer life. But Akbar did not use his royal power to *force* this on his subjects. There were conscientious objectors and he respected them. In fact, the emperor gave utmost liberty of thought to his subjects. And for the acceptance of his views he would always appeal to their conscience with all the ardour of his soul.

Unity is one of the central teachings of Islam, and there is no doubt that Akbar was an apostle of it. And the very way in which he tried to give form to it was by itself a marvel demonstration of human fellowship. The cultural unity which Akbar saw among his Hindu subjects helped to strengthen his conviction, born of his essentially religious nature, that a great nation would in future evolve in India taking its stand on a larger unity; and it was the truth of this unity that the emperor sought to emphasise in all that he did politically and culturally. The very fact that he persistently endeavoured to unite India even in the teeth of a tough opposition is an eloquent testimony to the ruling passion, the life-long dream, the master-idea of his masterful personality. To Akbar's intuition this vast country was one and indivisible, one people and even one race; and he was daring enough to encourage racial intermingling, so that a new type of humanity might be produced by this fusion.

Akbar could see far into the future. He was verily a practical idealist who commanded a vision of the greatness of India in the future broad-based on her fundamental oneness. And if he did not live to see the realisation of his noble vision, he was of course happy to feel and find that his subjects,—Hindus, Muslims and the other sects and communities,—were tending to grow in a common national consciousness through the recognition of the incontestable fact that the land of India was their common home and that the king was a benevolent organiser and promoter of their collective well-being.

While it is true that the membership of *Din-i-Ilahi* was confined to the sincere few among the Hindu and Muslim aristocracy, it is also true that the desire to serve the common good, which was the basic aim of the Order, made a profound and lasting impression on the masses. Thousands used to flock to the polo-ground of Fatehpur to receive the

bounty which Akbar lavished upon the poor without any distinction of race or creed. When the Padshah appeared at the *Jharoka* window of the palace every morning to say his prayers and to show himself to his subjects, crowds of Hindus assembled below in the hope of being able to begin their day with a sight of 'Vishnu's viceregent on earth', *Dilliswarova Jagadiswarova*.

Thus did the Hindus find in Akbar an emperor whose magnanimity and saintliness revived in them their age-old virtue of unstinted loyalty to the king, which was one of their racial traits lying dormant for a long time. It was this spontaneous loyalty from all communities of his subjects, especially from the Hindus, which was one of the most valuable of the legacies that Akbar left to his descendants. Indeed much of the achievements of the later Mughal emperors was possible only because of what Akbar had done in a spirit of broadminded statesmanship and politico-religious equity.

Akbar would not allow the Ulema to interfere with the affairs of the State. He disdained the idea that the religious creeds of one community, especially those of its orthodox section, should dominate the political life of a country in which there are many other influential communities forming the major population and belonging to different faiths. He abolished social evils like *sati* and early marriage among the Hindus since he thought that life could not fully grow in a society demoralised by such preposterous customs. He revoked iniquitous laws and taxes imposed on the Hindus by the previous Muslim rulers for the simple reason that religion should not be made a ground for any special impost, far less for those which stand self-condemned in the eye of God. In the midst of the jubilation of victory when spirits naturally run high and hilarious and the brute impulses to sack and pillage acquire an unchallenged traditional legitimacy, Akbar showed a remarkable magnanimity towards the conquered by forbidding all exhibition of cruelty and vandalism on the part of his troops. This was no less an act of humanity and large-heartedness than an astute stroke of wise statecraft which won the hearts as well as the bodies of the conquered and made for peace and stability and security in his kingdom.

The builder of an empire, Akbar felt the need of political unity in it, and his constant concern was to consolidate his whole dominion into an inviolable integrity that would render it safe against all forces of disruption, and make it possible for the people to progress unimpeded in all directions. Akbar appropriated all *jagirs* into Crown lands as a step among others towards centralising his authority which was politically indispensable. But his success in bringing about the unity that existed in his empire came largely as a result of the way in which he gave form to his conviction that peace and goodwill are the strongest foundation of an empire. Babar and Sher Shah had tried to base their administration on this idea ; but it was left to Akbar to make it the very guiding principle of his rule. His declaration of *Sulh-i-kul* (universal peace) at a time when in Europe the principle enforced was *cujus regio ejus religio* (as is the religion, such is the region) sprang from a soul that knew and lived the noblest ideals of kingship. The emperor proclaimed: "A monarch is a pre-eminent representative of God. Upon his conduct depends the efficiency of any course of action. His gratitude to his Lord, therefore, should be shown in just government and due recognition of

merit ; that of his people in obedience and praise. Tyranny is unlawful in every one, especially in a sovereign who is the guardian of the world." Every word of it rings with sincerity, reminding us of similar edicts of another emperor of India who, nearly two thousand years before Akbar, had tried to conduct his administration according to the tenets of Dharma. Akbar made the best use of all his extraordinary qualities to discharge this self-imposed responsibility ; and history testifies to the success of his efforts, of which the most glowing proof is furnished by the spontaneous fealty that the Padshah received from all communities.

Akbar had as his Revenue Minister, Todar Mall, a Hindu who introduced many beneficial innovations which improved the financial affairs of the State ; and the highest offices were thrown open to Hindus and Muslims alike, appointments being made on the merits of the candidates. Man Singh, who has been characterised by a Muslim historian as a Hindu wielding the sword of Islam, was one of the most trusted of Akbar's generals. There are instances, too numerous to mention, of Hindus having been placed in positions of trust and responsibility. More than half of Akbar's army was Hindu, the Rajputs being a substantial element in it. The winning of the Rajputs' loyalty was undoubtedly a triumph of Akbar's equitable statesmanship. It is because of them that millions in Northern India looked with favour on Akbar's government and had always its welfare at heart. And great, indeed, was their contribution to the synthesis of religions and cultures, which was the most cherished dream of the emperor's life. Neither is it to be overlooked that by their acceptance of the democratic Muslim ideas of political and social organisation the Rajputs helped in the fusion of the Hindus and the Muslims in many spheres of their corporate life. No impartial historian can fail to give credit to these pioneers of Indo-Muhammadian culture which is the greatest gift of the Mughals to this country.

Akbar's insatiable thirst for knowledge brought him into intimate contact with many saints and scholars of different schools of thought. The renowned Muslim saint Shaikh Salim, the famous mystic Dadu with whom Akbar had a discussion for forty days, the Sufi freethinker Mubarak who was well-known for his knowledge of the literature and philosophy of Greece, the Brahmin Pandit Purushottam, the Jaina scholar Hiravijaya, the Parsi theologian Dastur Meherji, the Jesuit Father Rodolfo were only a few among a large number of thinkers and saintly personalities of the time, with whom Akbar used to have free exchange of views regarding philosophies and cultures of which they were then the recognised exponents. The emperor was also keenly interested in science and history. "Among the books of renown," says Abul Fazl, "there are few that are not read in His Majesty's assembly hall ; and there are no historical facts of the past ages, or curiosities of science, or interesting points of philosophy, with which His Majesty, a leader of impartial sages, is unacquainted." Thus sumptuously fed and nurtured upon the treasures of wisdom, Akbar's mind developed a large synthesis in its essential cast and outlook, and a love of culture and refinement. We find the former expressing itself in the new idealism propounded by him out of the fundamental truths of all religions, and the latter in the wonderful forms of arts and letters that grew under Akbar's fostering care and gave to the Mughals all their greatness and glory. Indeed, the emperor was an enthusiastic patron of every kind of cultural activity ; and the creative energies of the Hindus and

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roke into a combined endeavour to produce what may be called composite expression of Indian culture.

dreamt of an all-India empire. Evidently, such a dream could be realised but by the suppression of local independence and the unification of the provincial principalities under a central control. But as the dream of a politically ambitious ruler like Alexander but an idealist lover of India and her people and culture, it entailed chaos and disorder, provoked little resistance or revolt except in a few cases where regional patriotism obstinately sought to cleave the soil. An all-India empire was a gorgeous dream and it can be said that the faint-hearted who will fling criticism at Akbar for this. The maintenance of an empire undoubtedly requires diplomacy as well as the leadership of a high order, but, as we have emphasised above, Akbar's vision was far greater than Akbar the diplomat or Akbar the statesman. No other ruler of men in history could even have imagined the activities of the *Mahtabnama* in which were held the philosophical conferences under his guidance in various directions. Some critics have characterised Akbar's *Din-i-Ilahi* as an attempt at his own deification; but an impartial study of the history will convince all that Akbar never sought to deify himself. The fact that can be said was that the great emperor was aiming at the establishment of a unified and cosmopolitan theocracy in India with a permanent monarch at its head, and there was nothing improper or wrong in it. For, theocracy has been the character of all States in the world from the days of Egypt and Assyria. It was the Hindu ideal, and the ideal of Islam too. All that Akbar sought to do was to bring it into line with the political ideals of the sixteenth century and to meet the special needs of a country like India—a land of many peoples and many peoples.

The greatness of Akbar lay in this that he did not believe in the maintenance of a seeming homogeneity by the application of external force. He wanted to change the very hearts of the people, fire them with national idealism and provide them with a new politico-social out-look and a new frame-work of corporate self-expression. This was the earnest and sincere soul to realise the integral unity of national thought and action. But alas! the task was too great and complex for even an exceptionally gifted and inspired he might be. A spiritual genius of that order was needed, a perfect combination of the unclouded intellect and the infallible power of knowledge, to actualise this dream of a united India—united in faith and culture, in aspiration and action, in all the teeming diversity of a richly flowering national life.

In appraising the work of Akbar the historian must acknowledge that he did for the political advancement of India he was guided by the vision of her oneness and integrity. But this vision opens into a deeper meaning, a higher purpose. It is not for nothing that the sages and seers of ancient India worshipped this holy land as the Mother who holds in her bosom infinite bounties not only for the nourishment of man but also for his spiritual sustenance and growth. Even what she externally is was regarded by them as a conscious being, the Maha-Shakti, the Supreme Mother, who will manifest herself to liberate humanity and lead it to its divine goal. 'One India' was a glowing dream, wrought out of the fire and fantasy of a

perfidious patriotism. It is a pre-ordained fact, a spiritual reality for materialisation when the children of this country, transcending the bounds of their caste, creed or race, will awaken to a deeper awareness of the Mother and discover in it their oneness. The cultural foundation necessary for such a consummation has always been there as an inheritance. Attempts have been made through the ages both by Hindu and Muslim emperors from Chandragupta Maurya to Akbar to build up the structure of a strong political unit ; but the structure took its final form under the British rule—a device of Nature to bring about the finality after so many previous means had been found wanting. Political unity of India is a requisite condition for that real and permanent unity which it is the destiny of India to attain. And the time is approaching, despite the reactionary forces with which the country is threatened today. For, the Shakti of India must fulfil her Will. No power on earth can stop her.

What Akbar foresaw and began is being progressively developed and perfected by a complexus of politico-cultural forces of prodigious magnitude. Akbar's was the greatness of the vision, the largeness and nobility of the conception, the intrepidity of the first decisive formation, the kingliest of political dreamers, the mightiest of political architects. Among the most humane of administrators and legislators, Akbar stands unique in history. Neither Alexander, nor Caesar, nor Napoleon was endowed with such an amplitude and depth of humanity combined with such strength and far-seeing constructive genius. Akbar was no power-mad, no fanatic of a religious or political idea, no reckless gambler in the fortunes of a nation. Chandragupta, Asoka and Akbar—these are the three names that shine out with a striking lustre from the galaxy of Indian monarchs. The first two were the pure product of ancient Hindu civilisation and the last, a fine flower of that Indo-Saracenic fusion which was to play an important part in the creative life of the united India of tomorrow. It is time we tried to reassess the greatness of this royal legacy of our motherland.

Lights on the Veda*

By T. V. KAPALI SASTRY

I

An eminent Indian refuses to accept Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Veda and the doctrine of the mystics chiefly on the ground that it is based on the verdict of European scholars as well as to the Indian opinion as propagated by the Mimamsakas. To have a picture of the objections before us is, doubtless, an advantage, for that will help us to follow intelligently and with caution and discerning appreciation the line of thought chalked out in the writings of Sri Aurobindo on the Veda. We shall therefore start with a succinct statement of the reasons largely given by the critic's own words and then proceed to examine the position, make our own conclusions and show how far our view is in consonance with the religious and spiritual traditions of India, supported by textual evidence from the Rig Samhita down to the Puranas that are the scriptures of our religions of our own times. The writer is an Indian of wide knowledge, a competent exponent of Indian thought and culture, and if we value his views to his objections it is not because he is an authority in the field of Vedic learning—nor does he claim to be one and it is not necessary for him to be a specialist to share the views of reputed authors—but because his views are representative of current conceptions about the Veda among most Indians of modern education. Let us first state the objections of authors on whom he relies for his ideas of the Rig Veda.

Twofold Objection

Incompetent scholars who have made these scriptures their life-study have expressed these views: they speak of the primeval childlike naive prayer of the Rig Veda and maintain that the Aryans of the Rig Veda possessed a primitive naivety however primitive it might be. Roth and Dayananda Saraswati agree with this view. Ram Mohan Roy considers the Vedic hymns to be the allegorical representations of the attributes of the supreme Brahman. According to others, Bloomfield among them, the hymns of Rig Veda are sacrificial compositions of a primitive race which attached a great importance to ceremonial rites. Bergaigne holds that they are all of a later date. Sayana, the famous Indian commentator adopts the naturalistic interpretations of the Gods of the hymns, which is supported by the European scholarship. Sayana sometimes interprets the hymns in the spirit of the later Brahmanic religion. These varying opinions need

This is an English version of the Introduction to the Sanskrit book (under the title of 'Introduction') on Rig Veda in the light of Sri Aurobindo's writings.

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not be looked upon as antagonistic to one another, for they only point to the heterogeneous nature of the Rig Vedic collection.' Equipped with the opinions of these eminent men, our writer drives at a summary rejection of Sri Aurobindo's view of the Rig Veda. The famous author quotes a passage from the 'Secret of the Veda' in the *Arya* and recommends the dismissal of the same with an air of hesitancy that adds to the poise of scholarly reserve, at the same time heightening the tone of a persuasive appeal. "The great Indian scholar-mystic (Sri Aurobindo) . . . the Veda to him is a mystery-religion corresponding to the Orphic and Eleusinian creeds of ancient Greece . . . when we find this view is opposed not only to the modern views of European scholars but also to the traditional interpretations of Sayana and the system of Purva Mimamsa, the authority on Vedic interpretation, we must hesitate to follow the lead of Mr. Aravinda Ghose however ingenious his point of view may be."

Criticism Examined

The chief point in the objection raised against Sri Aurobindo's views may be summed up in the words of the same scholar. 'It is not likely that the whole progress of Indian thought has been a steady falling away from the highest spiritual truths of the Vedic hymns. It is more in accordance with what is known as the general nature of human development, and easier to concede that the later religions and philosophies rose out of the crude suggestions and elementary moral ideas and spiritual aspirations of the early mind, than that they were a degradation of an original perfection.' This is how the modern Indian mind at its best has assimilated the historic spirit of Europe, developed the rationalistic outlook of the nineteenth century and grown into a strong, almost stubborn, self-complacent attitude that precludes from its purview the admission of any fresh or neglected fact, new evidence or other view that is likely to unsettle its notions of man's past history and the course of his psychological and spiritual development. The error in the conception lies in the supposition that man began to develop an inner and spiritual life in a comparatively developed stage of culture and civilisation, at any rate, long after he left behind the fears and fancies of a relatively remote period of primitive life. But Sri Aurobindo has nowhere stated that there was an original perfection of which the later stages were a degradation. To say that the *seers* of the Rig Veda were Mystics who had developed an inner life and self-culture of a high order is not the same thing as to assert that the men of Rig Vedic times had obtained an all-comprehensive perfection, spiritual, moral and intellectual which was followed by a long course of degradation across the centuries. When we come to state the bases of Sri Aurobindo's reinterpretation of the Rig Veda these misconceptions will lose their grounds or their semblance to stand on; but it is necessary to point out here that the Vedic age is not at all presumed to be an age of Reason and intellectual development and what we call exact sciences as we know them, but it was undoubtedly one of Intuition, an age of the Mystics who had developed certain lines of self-development and culture of the Spirit and had their own technique of the Yogic art, and methodised their system of building the inner life. This does not

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mean that all men of the Vedic age were Mystics and seers or that the latter shared with the populace their profound knowledge of the laws and processes of the workings of the Inner Nature, or of the truths and secrets of the Godhead they communed with. We can take up an illustration from our own times. Ours is an age of high intellectual advancement, an age of Science that daily and hourly continues unravelling the mysteries of Physical Nature and her revelations are pinnacles of wonder. But how many are intellectual in this age of intellectual supremacy? Very few, indeed. How many again among the small proportion of intellectuals are competent to follow the strides of Science and intelligently appreciate her progress? Again, how many are among them qualified and initiates for entry into the secret world of the laws and processes that release vast dimensions of energy lying hidden in the womb of the Atom? Few, few and less than few. But whatever the dominating principle of power be, whether it is spiritual wisdom and occult knowledge, or scientific culture, aesthetic sense and refinement and intellectual ardour, or sheer political skill and military strength, or production and distribution of necessities or luxuries of life, of wealth answering to the material and vital needs of human groups, always it works itself out through just a few human centres amidst masses of men who receive and benefit and prosper or resist and reject and perish or tolerate and bear with the consequences of the concentrated expressions of a few, by far numerically the inferior few.

The question of perfection in any age or stage of human development in any field does not arise at all. In India, the intellectual philosophies is not a degradation of an original perfection of the Vedic age, but a certain line of development practically cut off from the different lines of spiritual thought and occult knowledge and life developed to a high degree by the mystics of the Vedic age—an age far remote and removed from the days of the Brahmanas and the Upanishads. Besides, it is a mistaken conception that spiritual experience, intuitive insight, occult knowledge, inspiration and similar non-rational acquisitions of some of the so-called primitive races are either fancies and therefore not valid, or if valid they belong to a later period when man advanced in general knowledge of himself and his environment and lived in a better civilised state with the comparative comforts of life that economic improvement brings. But some of the ancient pre-historic peoples have had profound knowledge of Nature in certain spheres which our learned critic himself admits in these words: 'The most ancient fancies sometimes startle us by their strikingly modern character, for insight does not depend upon modernity.'

It may be asked: If there had been a great spiritual progress made by the Vedic seers, how did it then come to a close without leaving its impress upon the ages that followed? Whether it left its influence or not and in what way if it did at all, forms part of the subject proper to which we shall turn in course. But the language and mentality of the Vedic age certainly underwent a great change; but it is almost a miracle that something of the Vedic tradition was preserved, attempted to be preserved in the Brahmanas and Upanishads in spite of the gulf between the two periods. Somehow the age of the Vedic Mystics came to an end. Nobody could question why; its period was over in India as the age of Mysteries in ancient Greece and Egypt and elsewhere. But on that account we do not deny that there was an age of the Rishis who had

developed a sublime type of spiritual culture whatever the state of civilisation and economic development according to our standards they may have reached. Supposing that our present civilisation practically perishes for the most part, as a consequence of some catastrophe in Nature, or by a cataclysm brought about by Nature's stupendous work in the monstrous brain of man producing a reasonable number of atom-bombs, would it be right for future generations to deny altogether the actual fact of the scientific culture, the intellectual advancement and general progress of civilisation of our times?

The crux of the whole question of human progress lies in a proper appreciation of the history of human psychology itself from the very beginnings as far as is and can be known to us. The position, as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo, of the Vedic age and its spiritual culture can be summed up in a few lines. 'In the age of Vedas or in Egypt, the spiritual achievement or the occult knowledge was confined to a few, it was not spread in the whole mass of humanity. The mass of humanity evolves slowly, containing in itself all stages of evolution from the material and the vital man to the mental man. A small minority pushed beyond the barriers, opening the doors to occult and spiritual knowledge and preparing the ascent of the evolution beyond mental man into spiritual and supra-mental being.' Now let us follow him in the brief survey he takes of the spiritual history of India; it will be clear that it is not at all a matter of degradation of an original perfection, but of a downward curve with a purpose. 'Here in India the reign of Intuition came first. Intellectual mind developing afterwards in the later philosophy and science.... The Vedic age was followed by a great outburst of intellect and philosophy which yet took spiritual truth as its basis and tried to reach it anew, not through a direct Intuition or occult process as did the Vedic seers, but by the power of the mind's reflective, speculative, logical thought; at the same time processes of Yoga were developed which used the thinking mind as a means of arriving at spiritual realisation, spiritualising this mind itself at the same time. Then followed an era of the development of philosophies and Yoga processes which more and more used the emotional and aesthetic being as the means of spiritual realisation and spiritualised the emotional level in man through the heart and feeling.' Then he continues to show how this was followed by the Tantric and other processes that took up the will in the mind and life and sensations and used them as instruments and fields of spiritualisation. Even the Hatha Yoga later attempts at a divinisation of the body; here also is an endeavour to arrive at the same achievement with regard to living matter though this still 'awaits the discovery of the true characteristic method of Spirit in the body'. This is the spiritual history of India from the Vedic age down to recent times always reaching the height, then followed by an attempt to take up 'each lower degree of the already evolved consciousness and link it to the spiritual at the summit.'

It will be thus seen quite reasonable to dismiss the first objection based on the wrong supposition that the Vedic hymns are sheer primitive babblings and poetical fancies of the Aryan peoples just emerging from an original ignorance. We can explain the drawbacks of European Vedic scholarship of the last century if we remember that it started at a time when the materials available to it were scanty, and it tried to theorise

upon the religion, history, civilisation, society, and many other things connected with the Aryans of the Vedic age with what little knowledge it then had of the history of other earlier races. Besides, in spite of the scrupulous care associated with all scholarly labours that Europe brought to bear upon its Vedic studies it could not escape the limitations of its temperamental mould which is in fact diametrically opposed to the Indian spirit. It surmounted the difficulties in understanding the texts by partly drawing upon conjectures and partly on certain inexact sciences, very often conjectural—comparative philology, comparative mythology or comparative religion. Today times, along with them conditions, have changed; fresh facts stare us in the face; new evidences accumulate; modern sociologists revise the old-world opinions of past generations of scholars in regard to human origins, the history, polity, psychology, religion and life in general of at least some of the early races and peoples whom we call primitive. In addition to these, materials available for Vedic studies are much more today than a century ago. It will be thus seen that a thorough revision of opinions among scholars about the Vedic culture and Vedic worship is a desideratum.

Indian students and seekers of knowledge of the Vedas especially in the last century followed the lines of European scholarship and swallowed as gospel truth European opinion because it had gained in prestige by its association in their minds with European science and culture which is a different matter altogether, estimable indeed, based on different, firmer grounds. But today there is no reason whatever to follow the same track which was an unconscious but necessary error in the beginning when the Indian mind had to find and see the light of modern critical methods of scholarship from Europe. Now there is no dearth of critical study or scientific outlook in India and there is plenty of it as evidenced in the fields of science, literature, philosophy and many branches of ancient or modern learning. But, can the same be said about Indian Vedic scholarship? Here it is the same song of the nineteenth century Europe that is being relayed and sung by Indian writers on the Vedas; though there may be some alterations in details, some minor discoveries of facts, the fundamental position has remained fixed, well-fashioned and established, not shaken at all. The primitive peoples, nature-worshipping semi-civilised races, poets of childish fancies, simple-minded enough to be wonder-struck daily at the appearance of dawn, fear-ridden at the thought of night—these are still there at the bottom of all their labours in the field of what they call Vedic research. We can take the example of the Vedic Dawn to show the nonsense that is still indulged in seriously by these our Indian admirers of Vedic poetry. It has become a respectable convention with the writers on Veda to follow in the footsteps of their European teachers to extol the Vedic poets of the Dawn, and admirably quote the same hymn or hymns. But when we hear eulogistic plaudits showered upon these primitive poets for singing the glory of the Dawn and look into the sense of the hymns addressed to Usha as given by them, of course, with their own improvement made upon the meaning given by Sayana, we find ourselves face to face with queer people that composed these poems, and indeed we are at a loss to decide who are queer—whether those Rishis or these scholars. Look at the grotesque situation when we follow the scholars who make a convenient use of Sayana to the extent necessary for

their theories and explanations. When the Rishi gives vent to his gratitude in a joyous cry 'We have crossed over to the other shore of this darkness' we are called upon to assume that he means literally darkness and that no figure is meant and that he refers to the normal awakening to the daily sunrise which he hymned with so much ardour. Again these people, the Rishis, sat down to the sacrifice at dawn and prayed for light when it had already come! The height of absurdity and irrationality is reached when these Rishis believed—or more truly, when we are asked to believe—that it was only 'by their prayers that the Sun rose in the heavens and the Dawn emerged from the embrace of her sister Night'. But such a belief can certainly be ascribed to the Rishis only on the gratuitous assumption that they were savages overpowered by a 'terror of darkness which they peopled with goblins, ignorant of the natural law of succession of day and night'. But even here, the difficulty is that that they seem to know it, for they speak of 'the *undeviating rule* of the action of the gods and of dawn following always the path of the eternal law of truths'. So far, for irrational assumptions and uncritical acceptance by most Indian scholars of the imported theories of Vedic origins.

The moment critical acumen is applied to the study of the Vedic hymns in the original with some respect for the most ancient of all traditions concerning the *mantras*, the Riks and Rishis, at once the Vedic verses cease to be fanciful poetry, and the Vedic seers gradually uncover themselves as seers of Truth. And if we accept what Sri Aurobindo for the purposes of reasoning and intellectual appeal calls his hypothesis, but what in fact is just an intelligible statement of his knowledge born of clear perception of the truths about the Vedic seers, the Vedic hymns and the Vedic gods, the result is a twofold gain. For negatively, most of the incongruities attributed to the Rishis vanish, many dilemmas in the understanding of the Riks in many places are got rid of; and positively, we gain in our knowledge of the spiritual stature of the Seers, of the mystic Wisdom embedded in the hymns, of the true character of the Vedic gods, and many unintelligible portions of the Upanishads become clear as daylight; and last we find justification, satisfactory explanation for the claims of the Agamas (Tantras) of various schools and the later day Puranas and minor scriptures that the Vedas are the repository of spiritual wisdom and Divine knowledge and that they themselves are attempts to represent something of that knowledge in their own way for peoples of a later age.

Traditional Interpretation

Before we proceed to note briefly the special features of Sri Aurobindo's exposition of the hymns of the Rig Veda and point out how he unveils the true and inner sense of the Mystics and refer also to the authentic evidence he shows as emerging from the Vedic texts themselves, we shall first dispose of the other objection mentioned earlier that his views on the Vedic hymns could not be accepted because they are opposed to the 'traditional interpretations of Sayana and the system of Purva Mimamsa, the authority on Vedic interpretation'. Here again is a misconception or an ambiguity concerning what is called the traditional interpretation of Sayana. What is the tradition that was handed down to Sayana which

he maintains in his interpretation of the Rig Vedic hymns? Or, is it meant by the term the tradition that he himself started and that has been handed down to us through his commentary on the Riks? Such a question arises because when we go through his Rig-bhashya we find him maintaining a variety of traditions coming down from different schools of learning. He maintains mostly the ritualistic tradition that the Mantras are meant for sacrificial purposes, with great zeal, very often at the cost of a straight rendering of the text. But the Brahmanas, the original ritualistic scriptures themselves do not claim to be treated as the Vedas in the main of which the Mantras are a part having their place in the rituals. In scores of places Sayana in his commentary maintains the Vedantic tradition, the Puranic tradition and other Shastraic traditions without making any serious attempt to take notice of the discrepancies in his writings, much less to reconcile them at all. An instance may be cited to show that Sayana while endeavouring to expound the Riks in consonance with the tenets of the ritualist clean forgets that according to the latter there can be no mention of any actual historic occurrence in any portion of the Vedas, since they are eternal—every sentence, every word, every syllable. Again, when Sayana finds certain hymns clearly symbolic or containing allegorical allusions, he explains them in a quite simple way making references to the minutiae of certain rites that are meant and ought to be so understood and avoids to mention any other possible significances of the Riks in question. He was quite aware of the fact that the ritualists were just one of the three main interpreters of the Vedas and this is clear when he occasionally quotes Yaska making references to a threefold interpretation of the hymns of the Rig Veda. When he gives us alternative meanings of words or verses, which he quite often does, it is obvious he does so as a scholar, with a certain indifference to the acceptance of the alternative meaning if it does not fit in with a sacrificial context. What then is the tradition he himself received or he has left behind? It is a jumble of traditions that we find registered in his commentary, as has been stated already, though of course he started his work with the avowed object of demonstrating that the Riks are ancillary and indispensable to the ceremonial rites of Vedic sacrifice. Certainly he did not follow a particular tradition in interpreting the Riks; for there has been no tradition as such recorded and available in the shape of a commentary on the whole of the Samhita. Sayana himself does not make mention of any commentary on the Rik Samhita as having existed before him. Had there been one or had he even heard of one as having existed and lost, he would certainly have stated it. Does he not refer to Yaska frequently whenever the latter explains the Riks? But he made his choice and sided with the ritualist supporting not fully, but to some extent, the Mimamsakas and wrote the commentary. The ritualistic tradition of Vedic religion was there long before him and he imbibed its spirit. That is not the same as to say—and it will be a travesty of truth—that that was also the tradition in regard to the interpretation of the Riks. If there was any tradition, it was the threefold interpretation of the Riks to which Yaska* draws our

* Yaska refers to many classes of interpreters of the Veda; spiritual knowledge, knowledge of the Gods and of sacrifice are the triple knowledge the threefold interpretation aims at.

attention. But Sayana's work has left us a new tradition that the Riks are to be interpreted only in one way and that is the way of the ritualist. The ancient tradition of a threefold interpretation has been thoroughly eclipsed, if not wiped out of the memory of the Indian Vedist for the last time and for good. This is the position. No one can seriously think of the so-called interpretation of Sayana as proving a bar to the acceptance of one of the three traditionally handed down interpretations of the Riks. We may in passing note that the tradition of the spiritual interpretation was revived by Madhwacharya before Sayana, a century earlier, to which we will turn in the proper place. In regard to the tradition of the Mimamsaka there is nothing more to say than that they openly and avowedly confined themselves to ritualistic texts and devised rules to interpret the passages of the Brahmanas and none of them has ever felt the need or taken pains to enquire into the meanings of the Mantras. Their enquiry is directed towards what they call Dharma which means duty as enjoined in the Brahmanas or Dharma-shastras. Jaimini the author of Mimamsa Sutas has not made any attempt to study the question of the interpretation of the Riks, nor does Shabaraswami, his commentator, nor the veteran Kumarila, not to talk of the lesser lights. Their field of enquiry is different. We may have occasion to refer to some of their views that have bearings on our subject. So much for the present.

It is not necessary here to make mention of the helpfulness of Sayana, its merits are great, but we can state this much that his commentary represents one phase of the Vedic worship, the external religion, namely, the Vedic sacrifice. Ages intervened between him and the Vedic Rishis. We may draw the reader's attention to the intelligent guess, to the sensible remarks of Prof. Benfey. 'Every one who has carefully studied the Indian interpretations is aware that absolutely no continuous tradition extending from the composition of the Veda to their explanation by Indian scholars, can be assumed; that, on the contrary, between the genuine poetic remains of Vedic antiquity and their interpretations a long continued break and tradition must have intervened, out of which, at most, the comprehension of some particulars may have been rescued and handed down to later times by means of liturgical usages and words, formulae, and perhaps also poems connected therewith.' This last work of rescue is exactly what Sayana's commentary represents. But these scholars lament, and along with them their loyal pupils of India, that Sayana is usually rational but is often deceived by the Brahmanas and misled by Yaska for whom he had a misplaced reverence. This is because though Sayana's interpretation gives them sufficient material for their rationalistic theories of Vedic gods, Vedic religion and Vedic poetry, it contains many other things, his theological beliefs, his irrational reverence for the gods which are after all none but Nature-Powers, his acceptance and exposition of spiritual ideas—though occasionally—that the Riks conveyed to him which could not be true according to them, considering the remote times of these primitive peoples and therefore adversely affected some of their suppositions and conclusions.

But whatever they may have thought erroneously, all that is but natural and such are always the imperfections that attend the labours of all pioneers in any field. In the galaxy of vanguards in the realm of Vedic studies Max Muller will always shine among those of the first

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magnitude, if only for his excellent edition of the Rik Samhita with Sayana Bhashya. Whatever notions he may have entertained earlier or later in the progress of his Vedic studies, he had one warning to give to his colleagues of the West ; we can take it as a caution to every one who takes to the study of the Rig Veda in India also. 'What we must guard against in all these studies is rejecting as absurd whatever we cannot understand at once, or what to us seems fanciful or irrational. I know from my own experience how often what seemed to me for a long time unmeaning, nay, absurd, disclosed after a time a far deeper meaning than I should ever have expected.'

The Central Truths

Now let us proceed with the proposition that the Rig Veda, its true and inner meaning, is spiritual and mystic ; that is the esoteric aspect of the Vedic hymns and Vedic worship. And this is the implication that we do not reject Sayana because his interpretation represents the exoteric side, the outer worship of the gods of Vedic pantheon. It may be that he may not be always correct in giving the meanings of verses even for his purpose, the meaning needed for ritualism. It may also be that the meanings he gives to words are not always consistent or always purposeful, but this is a matter to which reference will be made when necessity arises. But all this does not affect our position holding as we do that he represents one phase of the Vedic religion as understood and preserved to some extent by the Hindus of his times. In this connection it will be interesting to note the words of a Western savant, in his prefatory lines to one of the volumes of Wilson's translations of the Rig Veda. Referring to the work he says, 'This work does not pretend to give a complete translation of the Rig Veda, but only a faithful image of that particular phase of its interpretation which the mediaeval Hindus, as represented by Sayana, have preserved. This view is in itself interesting and of a historical value ; but far wider and deeper study is needed to pierce to the real meaning of these old hymns. Sayana's commentary will always retain a value of its own—even its mistakes are interesting—but his explanations must not for a moment bar the progress of scholarship.' We appreciate the balanced and judicial statement of this Western scholar, now a century ago, for uttering these words of caution and wisdom, in taking Sayana's commentary for a faithful picture of a particular phase of Vedic interpretation. We subscribe to every word of the passage of Prof. Cowell quoted above ; for, that, indeed, sums up the position of Sayana in relation to Vedic interpretation.

Now let us proceed with a bare statement of the central thought that governs our approach to the study of this most ancient sacred Scripture of India and later see how far we are supported by evidence emerging from the Rig Veda and other scriptures of later times. The Rig Veda represents and embodies the remnants of the Wisdom of ancient seers of a remote age at its close, far anterior to the times of the Brahmanas and the Upanishads. It constitutes the gospel of the Mystics, garbed in a symbolic vesture. The hymns that make the collection called Samhita are not the kind of poetical compositions we are familiar with, but are

words of inspiration that reveal the truth-perceptions of the *seer*, the Rishi. They are called Mantras and carry with them an occult and spiritual power appropriate to their sense and sound and found effective for special purposes by the seer, for himself and for others. They have a double meaning ; one is the inner, the true meaning of the Veda Mantra which is psychological and spiritual. This secret is known to the Rishis, to their disciples, in fact, only to the Initiates who have turned to build the inner life, learned to perform the inner sacrifice, offer what they have and what they are to the Gods, and receive from them what in return are bestowed upon them and thus progress towards the attainment of spiritual and Divine Felicity. The other meaning is external, meant for the common men of the times, useful for those who performed the outer sacrifice by which they propitiated the gods and which was the common exoteric religion of the Vedic age. The device of double meanings was a necessity for the preservation of the occult knowledge and spiritual wisdom, confined naturally to the competent few that were the initiates, while it averted the dangers that the common man was usually exposed to through ignorance and abuse, for the ordinary people are unprepared for the reception of uncommon inner truths, unripe for aspiration for higher life, feeble in soul for a stronger resolve and will for a life of the Spirit, for the activity of a godly life.

The device was indeed deliberate, but not laboured, not artificial ; it was spontaneous and natural. This may seem a contradiction in terms ; it is not so if we remember the real character of the language as it was then in the times of the Vedas ; it was not sheer convention as it has come to be with us. Human speech, the word, the voice, *Vak*, was at once an impelling subtle force and a propelled expression of thought or feeling or sensation in terms of the nervous being in man. It was often a nervous response to the phenomena that from within or without incite the feelings and ideas and sensations. The language of those remote ages was anything but conventional ; it was a natural expression of the human organism in terms of vocal sound, reproducing and acting to the stimuli from the environment, the objective universe, or as in the case of the Rishi from the Universe within of the higher powers, of the Spirit, of God. Language was a living growth, a live force. Besides, words of the Vedic age retain their derivative significance, so that when a word is uttered, it not only denotes the object intended, but signifies its characteristic aspect. Even as many words denote a single object to indicate its nature in different particulars, a single word also denotes different things in different context and in association with other words. All rhetorical works in Sanskrit language devote a section to this question of significance and suggestion of words in association with others. This literary tradition of the Sanskrit classicist can be traced to the hymns of the Rig Veda where words carry with them their meanings with the special significances proper to them, and in the context. Language then was not a rigid instrument of expression but in a fluidic state ; at the same time the meaning of a word was always definite, not vague. Therefore we can say in the language of the Sanskritist that words in the Veda always retained their derivative significance, *yaugika*, while their denotation was fixed and definite and in that sense a certain convention also was established, *yogarudha*. For instance, *Angiras* is definitely the name of a

Rishi, or an epithet of Agni when it does not mean the Rishi of that name ; but it does not lose its significance as a flame-power as illustrated in Angirastama, the most lustrous of flame-powers. Thus the device of double values was easy in the Vedic age and there is nothing artificial, laboured or unnatural there, as it would be in our age when language is conventional. (Some special cantos of Magha, Bharavi and Harsha illustrate the artificiality of *slesha*, *double entendre*, which would be undreamt of in the Vedic age.)

The thought content of the Riks was set in a system of parallelism through double values of the symbolic language employed to bring out the exoteric meaning which corresponded to its esoteric counterpart. If the gross and the outer meaning referred to mundane objects and things of physical Nature, the inner meaning running parallel to the same was psychological and spiritual and things of inner and higher Nature. The outer was looked upon as a symbol of the Inner and the elements and the objects of Nature in the outer Universe were seen and felt as symbolic of the truths and principles of the subtle Nature in the Inner existence. As a strong symbolic mentality governed the Vedic peoples—as is always the case with human societies in their earlier Dawns—in their thoughts and customs and social and religious institutions, the Sacrifice Yajna, the central fact of Vedic worship was arranged as a symbol of the great act of one's own offering of what one has and is to the gods,—the higher powers of universal Nature both within and without us—within as the psychological and spiritual, without as the forces of physical Nature. If the sacrifice as a whole is symbolic, all its elements, the objects used in the rites, are also symbolic of the elements, the principles and truths of the inner sacrifice which is the true one by which man calls upon the gods to come down to accept his offerings and by their help ascends to their Home, the Heaven, the Swar. Let us first make mention by citing instances of the symbolic value of certain chief features of the sacrifice before we take up the question of the system of the worlds in the Vedic Symbolism and the character and function of the Vedic gods and the ultimate purpose of the Vedic sacrifice.

These are the main features of the Yajna. The sacrificer Yajamana, the persons who help him in the sacrifice, the officiating priests, called Ritwiks, the offerings themselves and the fruits of the offering. The Yajamana is the soul, the human personality that offers the sacrifice ; the Ritwiks are those who officiate at the sacrifice, take their part in the right place at the right time ; the two parts of the word (*ritu* and *ij* from *yaj*) suggest their function that they do as their part in the sacrifice in the right season. There are four main orders of the Ritwiks ; each one has three assistants and altogether they total sixteen in a Soma sacrifice ; these details are not important enough to be taken up here, but it must be noted that the names of these Ritwiks generally signify their functions in the sacrifice and unmistakably in the inner sense. The first in the four orders is the Hota, the summoner, whose part in the officiating priesthood is to call the other priests and he leads the chanting calling upon the gods to be present ; he recites the Riks, voices out the revealed Word. In the inner sense he symbolises the God, the first-born in man who calls upon the other gods to come down and be present and accept the offering. He is the messenger of the gods, the immortal in the mortal. Adhwayu

is the second in order of the officiating priests : he is the active agent, the chief functionary ; he takes his stand upon the Yajus ; the active part of the Yajna represented by Yajus falls to his lot ; he gives directions to other priests ; he is, we may say, the executive head of the Adhwara which means sacrifice, but in the inner sense the two parts of the word (*adhwa* and *ra*) give the meaning 'taking to or accepting the path', i.e., pilgrim. For the image of the sacrifice in the Veda is at times journey or voyage. Therefore the Adhwaryu also is a god who is actively engaged in helping the human personality to complete the journey and lead him to the goal of sacrifice. Udgata comes next in the order ; he sings, he chants the Saman that delights the gods. In the esoteric meaning, he is the god of the rhythms that heal the imperfections and avert the failures and dangers on the path of the sacrifice and lift up by the music of the gods the human personality, the sacrificer, to the supreme felicity—Truth, Light, Immortality. Last comes the order of the officiating priest, called Brahma ; he witnesses, gives his sanction at every stage in the ceremonials of sacrifice ; when a crucial step is reached or some mistake is committed in the performance of the rites, he points out ; always he is silent, does not move from his seat, but from his position he gives his approval of the details at every stage and sanctions the procedure by uttering the sacred syllable *Om*, culminating in the successful close of the Vedic rite. The inner sense is too obvious, the symbol is transparent, and that is the god presiding over the Word, the Causal Material of all Mantra. Just as the names of the officiating priests are symbolic and signify the gods or Higher Powers within, so the offerings of substances in the sacrifice are also symbolic. Ghrita, clarified butter symbolises warm brilliance or clarity of thought ; *pays* or *gavya*, yield of the Cow of light, *hava*, calling forth, *havis*, offering, are a few instances to the point. A closer examination of these and similar symbolic words would confirm the fact of a systematic arrangement of double values devised by the *seers* of the Vedic hymns. Similarly the fruits of the offering of which cows and horses (*go* and *ashwa*) are frequently mentioned and prayed for according to the exoteric interpretation are the results of the inner sacrifice, the occult and spiritual journey undertaken by the soul. *Go*, cow, is the symbol of Light and illumination of the mind ; *ashwa*, horse, symbolises vital force and all life-energies. If the former represents the power of knowledge *Jnana-shakti*, the latter the power of activity the *kriya-shakti* on the lower levels of existence. This much is sufficient for the present to indicate the symbolic character of the sacrifice and point to the direction in which the symbolic sense of its details is to be understood, helped, if not confirmed by the philological significances of these words of the Vedic hymns.

But there are other words which apparently are psychological terms, not easily or consistently applicable in the exoteric interpretation ; yet the esoteric sense is the true sense consistently applicable in all contexts. That is so because the exoteric was unimportant with the Rishis as that was intended as an outer cover for guarding the secret knowledge.

Another important aspect of the Vedic Symbolism is the Gods and the System of the worlds. There are three worlds denoted by the three sacred words, called the three *vyāhritis*, Bhuh, Bhuvah, Svah—the Earth, the Middle region (Antariksha), Heaven (Dyauh) ; a fourth *vyāhriti* points to a vaster World of Light, Mahas and still higher there are the eternal

three worlds signified by the higher triple *vyāhriti*, called Jana, Tapas and Satya. Though the Veda frequently refers to the seven principles of Cosmic Existence, of Cosmic Energy, or Creative Force and Consciousness or Knowledge and Will, using the symbolic seven rivers, seven sisters, seven rays, seven seers, etc., it mostly and more frequently deals with the first three worlds and their gods as it is the lower triple world that immediately matters to us, constituted as our being is at present. That is the reason why more hymns are devoted to Agni, the god presiding over the Earth and most to Indra, the Lord of the gods of this triple world, while the Sun, Surya, undoubtedly the Supreme God of the Veda, above all the gods of the triple world, has received a lesser number of hymns—the Surya, the sublime Light of the Solar World for the winning of which all *tapasya* was undertaken by the Rishi, all sacrifice was meant to be offered. The three worlds are the three Cosmic divisions of the Vedic Rishis of which the Earth represents and symbolises the Physical consciousness, the Heaven, Dyauh, symbolises the consciousness in the Pure Mind ; in between, the middle region symbolises the forces of Life and consciousness as constituted in the cosmic principle of being that links the Heaven and Earth, the Mental and the Physical.

The Vedic gods are the Powers of the universal Nature both in the outer and the inner existence. On the exoteric side they are identified with the Nature-powers—Indra the God of rain, Maruts the storm-Gods, Surya the Sun, Usha the Dawn, Agni the Fire and other Gods dubiously identified, such as Mitra and Varuna as Day and Night. But on the esoteric side their character and function in the inner worlds are psychological and spiritual and emerge as such from the epithets applied to them. Their activities, the symbolic or allegorical meaning of the legends connected with them reveal their identities as not merely the many names for different functionings and powers but distinct personalities of the Godhead. Agni, Fire, may mean for the ignorant mind or ordinary worshipper the third element or at best the principle of heat and light in the Physical Nature, or it may mean the sacrificial Fire as a superhuman personage, one of the benefactors of the sacrificer, giver of wealth,—cows and horses, gold, offsprings, women, food, fame. But the name Agni to the Initiate carries with it at first the philological significance of force and brilliance. But his personality comes to the surface from his activities that the hymns describe. He is the first God to be awakened in man ; he is placed in the front, *purohita*, that he may lead us ; the messenger of the Gods, he is often mentioned as their face *mukham*, their mouth, *ayam*. He is in man the flaming force of the Divine Will with wisdom that helps the human personality to offer the elements of its being, its various parts and powers to their Universal correspondences, represented by the Cosmic Powers, the God-personalities of the sole Supreme Godhead. These are Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Soma, Maruts, Ribhus and others, each of whom has his own special Name, specific function, distinct personality. It is enough for our purpose to notice a few important names of the Gods with the principles and powers they embody in carrying out the Cosmic activity of the creative Godhead, the Lord of Truth.

If Agni here is the seven-tongued (*Sapta-jihva*) power of Divine Will with wisdom, the immortal guest in our mortal being, and his activity is directed towards mediating between Earth and Heaven and therefore

he ascends, Indra there above is the Great Power manifested as the Pure, the Luminous Divine Mind, descends with his lightnings, showers (Vrishan) the life-giving rains, destroys, as the Hero, all the covering, obscuring and obstructionist forces, makes possible the discovery of illumined truths, and perception and attainment of the Sun of Truth. Surya is the Sun, the Lord of the supreme Truth, the Creator, Savita, of things. Soma represents the Beatitude, the Delight of existence ; he is the Lord of Bliss and Immortality. The Gods are immortals because they live by the essential delight of all created existence. In man the immortalising juices (rasa) are hidden and when by *tapasya*, discipline, and with the help of the higher Powers, chiefly beginning with Agni the Divine child born to man, these are extracted and offered to the Gods they get the needed nourishment in him, 'they increase him by themselves increasing in him'. Again, there is Varuna the God of Vast Purity destructive of all crookedness and sin ; Mitra, luminous Power of love harmonising all thoughts and feelings and acts and impulses. There are goddesses also ; each god has his Female Energy and is mentioned occasionally and also hymned, such as Indrani, Varunani, Agnaya. Besides there are Devatas who are in their own right Female Powers of whom Aditi the Infinite is the foremost, the Mother of the Gods, Adityas ; Mahi or Bharati, 'the vast word that brings us all things out of the Divine source', Ila 'the strong primal word of the Truth who gives us its active vision', 'Sarama, the Intuition' and a few other names with their functions are mentioned in the 'Doctrine of the Mystics'. The distinction between the Male and Female energies, it must be noted, lies in the fact that the former are 'activising souls' while the latter 'passively executive and methodising energies'.

What we have so far stated is just a sketch of the Vedic Symbolism as applied to the sacrifice, the system of the worlds, the Gods and some of the main features connected with them. But this cannot be complete even as a short sketch without stating in clear terms the central teaching of the Mystics as revealed in the hymns of the Rig Veda. We cannot do it better than registering here the authentic words of Sri Aurobindo, the discoverer of Vedic Symbolism, the teacher who has recovered for us the lost light to illumine the passages of the Veda for intelligent grasp and perception of the truths couched in the hymnal texts of the mystics.

Here are the categorical statements summed up in his words :

This is the first and central teaching : the thought around which all is centred is the seeking after Truth, Light, Immortality. There is a Truth higher and deeper than the truth of outward existence, a Light greater and higher than the light of human understanding which comes by revelation and inspiration, an immortality towards which the soul has to rise. We have to find our way out to that, to get into touch with this Truth and Immortality, *sapanta ritam amritam*, to be born into the Truth, to grow in it, to ascend in spirit into the world of Truth and to live in it. To do so is to unite ourselves with the Godhead and to pass from mortality into immortality.

Here is the second mystic doctrine :

There is an inferior truth here of this world mixed as it is with much falsehood and error, *anritasya bhureh*, and there is a world

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or home of Truth, *sadanam ritasya*, the Truth, the Right, the Vast, *Satyam ritam brihat*, where all is Truth-conscious, *rita-chit*. There are many worlds . . . but this is the world of the highest Light . . . the world of the Sun of Truth, *Swar*, or the Great Heaven. We have to find the path to this Great Heaven.

And this is the third:

Our life is a battle between the powers of Light and Truth, the Gods who are the Immortals and the powers of Darkness. These are spoken of under various names as *Vritra* or *Vritras*, *Vala* and the *Panis*, the *Dasyus* and their kings. We have to call in the aid of the Gods to destroy the opposition of these powers of Darkness who conceal the Light . . . we have to invoke the Gods by the inner sacrifice and by the Word call them into us—that is the specific power of the Mantra—to offer to them the gifts of the sacrifice and by that giving secure their gifts so that by this process we may build the way of our ascent to the goal.

Finally, as the summit of the teaching of the Vedic mystics comes the secret of the One Reality, *ekam sat, tad ekam* which became the central word of the Upanishads.

This is the brief outline of the central thought of the Veda in its esoteric sense. It is given here as expounded in the system of interpretation that Sri Aurobindo has methodised for the use of those who choose to follow the line. It is an invaluable guide to those who are not reasonably satisfied with the meanings of *Riks* hazarded by European scholars with the help of Sayana to a necessarily limited extent and accepted generally by educated Indians of modern times. It will be at least a finger-post for those who could read the original hymns with the help of Sayana's commentary and would turn to the road that leads to the riches of occult and spiritual truths treasured hidden by the coverings of symbolic imagery devised for double values by the ancient mystics of the *Rig Veda*.

II

Now that we have made an initial statement of the chief features that characterise this re-interpretation of the *Riks*, we shall proceed to examine our position in the light of Indigenous scholarship from the early times beginning with the hymns of the *Rig Veda* themselves covering the *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads*, *Nirukta*, *Brihat Devata*, standard works of the *Dharma Mimamsakas*, and other texts that have bearing on the subject. Let us at the outset state the questions that arise in regard to the likely objections or possible misconceptions—objections to the basis upon which our enquiry proceeds, and misconceptions of what the symbolic interpretation of Vedic hymns aims at.

How is it that the *Rig Veda* alone of the four *Vedas* that have come down to us is taken up for enquiry? Does it imply that the *Rig Veda* is the only true *Veda*, as it is indeed so esteemed by the European scholars? If not, how not? Is the whole basis of the *Dharma-Mimamsa* wrong? How are we to account for the appearance and stronghold of this creed? Is the tradition about the sacredness of the *Mantras* due to

their hoary antiquity alone? Or what precisely is the character of the sacredness? What is the subject matter of the Riks? Surely there are many classes of Mantras according to ancient authorities, such as the Nirukta or Brihad Devata ; if so, how can it be affirmed that the whole body of the hymnal texts is spiritual and occult in its import? If it is maintained that by piercing the veil of the symbols the so-called heterogeneous character of the hymns proves itself to be a deceptive appearance and disappears, what then are the grounds for resorting to such a line of approach? Is there warrant for such assumptions justified by the language of the Riks themselves? Rig Vedic hymns apart, is there anywhere else in the Vedic literature in general or other branches of learning subsequent to it the idea of symbolic sense attached to Vedic worship, Vedic hymns or Vedic sacrifice? What is the real character of the gods, the religion and philosophy of the Vedic Rishis stated in terms of modern thought? Are we to dismiss as futile the labours of Indian scholars of recent times who have made a profound study of the Vedas and made researches along Western lines? Between the Vedic Rishis of a dateless past and ourselves today, has there been none who made any attempt to get at the real meaning of the Vedas as we hold it to be, especially of the hymns of the Rik Samhita? These are the main questions we propose to discuss in order to clarify the position we have taken up in this study.

Rig Veda, the only true Veda?

The Vedas are certainly four in the sense that they are four different collections called Samhitas. But the Veda from immemorial times has been threefold, and called Trayi. If the former classification is based upon the collections, the latter upon the form and mode of the Veda Mantra. The Mantra in the metrical form is called Rik, that in prose, Yajus and that set to musical chant, Sāman ; it will be thus clear that the collection of the Riks is the Rig Veda Samhita, that of Yajus, Yajurveda Samhita and that of the Saman, Samaveda Samhita. The fourth set of compilation called Atharva Samhita contains Riks most of which form part of the Rik Samhita with a few variants in the readings and also prose Mantras. Whatever be the reasons for making a separate collection of these Mantras which are mostly Riks and some Yajus, it is an undoubted and admitted fact that they too are Mantras and therefore form part of the Vedas proper. But those Mantras of the Atharva Veda which are not to be found in the Rig Veda or Yajur Veda are not meant for sacrificial purposes which are the spheres of the Trayi collections for application. They are meant for other purposes, it is said, occult and medicinal. There are certain hymns in the Atharva Veda which are not in the Rik Samhita but which are sublime, highly advanced in spiritual ideas and occult knowledge. Since the Atharva Samhita is chiefly made up of Rik and Yajus, if we enquire into and grasp the central thought of the Trayi, an enquiry into the meaning of the Atharva Veda will be superfluous and can be dispensed with. Nor is there need to take up Sama Veda for enquiry. For it is just a selection of a thousand Riks and a little more taken from the Rik Samhita, set to chanting regulated by certain musical modes. There are about a dozen Riks in the Sama Veda

which are not traceable to the Rik Samhita as we have it. Since the language is sufficiently antique and the thought substance is on the same level with the rest, it is quite possible that at the time of the collection of the Saman-Riks they may have been in use by the Saman chanters but not in currency among the reciters of the Riks. Therefore a study of the Rik Samhita includes that of the Sama Veda. But what about Yajur Veda? The Yajur Veda is also a Veda, if we do not take it up for consideration, it is not because it is considered inferior to the Rig Veda, but because the Yajur Veda as we have it has an uncertain value for our purpose, which is the purpose of unveiling the Vedic symbolism in order to get the spiritual thought of the Rishis, the inner meaning of the Mantra, the real character of the gods, and the goal of man as envisaged by our forefathers of the race. For the language of the Riks affords a better field of enquiry, it is more systematic and intelligible in its symbolism than Yajus. Besides the difficulty with the Yajur Veda is that the Taittiriya school maintains in the body of its Samhita both the Mantras and Brahmanas as forming the Veda. Our enquiry is related to the Mantras alone and not to the Brahmanas with or without the Upanishads. The Taittiriya Samhita, called Krishna (Black) Yajur Veda contains the Yajur Mantras along with their ritualistic explanations, called Brahmanas. If a Samhita means a collection of Mantras as indeed it is in the case of the three other Samhitas, it is certainly questionable to call this collection of the Taittiriyas as a Veda Samhita. There is a story related of Yajnavalkya in connection with the Black Yajus. For some fault of his as a Vedic pupil of Vaishampayana, when the Guru ordered him to do an appropriate penance he promptly did it and also returned the Veda he learnt from him. How did he return it? It is said the Veda came out of him in the shape of *tittiri* birds and flew away ; that is why the Black Yajus is called Taittiriya. The purport of the story is that the militant Yajnavalkya revolted against the inclusion of the Brahmanas in the body of the Yajus Samhita as is clear from the consequential step he took ; for as the fruit of the *tapasya* he went through, *Aditya* in the form of a Horse (*Vāji*) appeared and revealed to him the Shukla (White) Yajur Veda containing only the Mantras without their ritualistic explanation, the Brahmanas. Therefore the White Yajus is called *Vajasaneyi* Samhita for which Yajnavalkya is responsible and its crowning chapter is the precious short *Ishavasya* Upanishad of 18 verses. If the Taittiriya Samhita includes in it the Brahmana, the *Vajasaneyi* Samhita, as if in reply to the former, incorporates the Upanishad—the only Upanishad of a Veda Samhita. This shows that Yajnavalkya, himself a Vedist, did not approve of the inclusion of ritualistic doctrines in any collection of the Veda Mantras.

But the fact must be made clear that we do not deny the Yajur Veda, even the Black one, its place and honour as a Veda, because we do not object to the explanation attempted in the Brahmanas for the purposes of the Sacrifice. But the symbols they freely use in their interpretation of the various elements of the sacrifice are often obscure and leave us in confusion, not always the same as those of the Rig Veda. Besides, the very fact that the White Yajus is a later recantation of the Yajur Mantras as revealed in the story of Yajnavalkya is enough for us to treat it as not useful for our purpose. Even the Black Yajus, the Mantra portion of it,

will not in any way help us ; that a great Vedist of Yajnavalkya's stature flung it at the face of the teacher—for in effect it comes to that—shows not his disregard of the Veda Mantra, but certainly points to his aversion for the absolutely gross interpretation of the Mantras indulged in by the ritualist in spite of the frequent symbolic explanation that dubiously refers to higher ideals or points to spiritual gains. The ritualistic interpretation of the Mantras and the sacrifice finding place in the body of a Veda Samhita, as is found in the Black Yajus, has had a far-reaching consequence on the religio-philosophic thought and theology in later day India. For therein is to be found the seed of the later theory and practice that it is the only possible sense of all Veda and therefore the Veda itself is part of the Karma Kanda. If the Yajur Veda is thus given such a treatment, whatever the reason be, is it not questionable that we practically do not take it into account as a Veda at all and in this respect the modern scholars and ourselves are in agreement? That we recognise Yajus as Mantra in prose and the Samhita as we have it is of no avail for our purpose is definitely true ; but on that account we do not consider the Yajur Veda, even the Black one, as no Veda at all. On the other hand we recognise the sacred character of the Yajur Mantras, as did the Agamikas (Shaivaite Tantriks) before us, who incorporated in their system the famous five-syllabled (Panchakshara) Shiva Mantra which occurs in the Rudra Adhyaya of the Black Yajus. This is just a famous instance out of a very large number of Mantras used for recital and prayer and for other purposes from the Yajus.

Therefore if we take into consideration the importance of the Rig Veda for the object we have in view, it is not so on the baseless assumption of the scholars that it is the only true Veda ; we value it for our enquiry because we aim at a knowledge of the significance of the antique language, of the systematic symbolism employed by the Rishis, of their spiritual stature, of the character of the gods ; and all this can be got only from the Rig Veda according to the Vedas themselves. For the Yajus is the Veda for the act of sacrifice, Adhwaryu-shakha, and it is admitted on all hands that even in the case of sacrifice 'what is done by the Rik, that alone is firm, strong—*yad richa tad dhridam*. Whatever is achieved by Yajus or Saman is loose'. This is what the Taittiriya Samhita itself says. We may note in passing that Yajus and Saman always existed side by side with the Rik. The Trayi is always inseparable ; and in the outer sacrifice each has its use, and no Yajna can be performed without all the three. In the inner sense the Triad has its place. There are many hymns in the Rik Samhita making mention of the Yajus and Saman and that is clear evidence for discarding the theory that Yajus came after Rik in point of time ; the question of Saman does not arise at all as it is a body of select hymns as already stated. The Nivids are all Yajus, *i.e.*, in prose, they are very ancient, judged by the form of the language. Some modern scholars think they are the prototype of the Yajur Mantras of the Samhita as we have it now ; but it is enough for us to note that the triad—Rik, Yajus and Saman—has been there all along from the beginning. The pre-eminence of the Rig Veda for investigation into the secrets of the sacrifice or the gods or of the goal aimed at by the sacrificer is not only admitted by the Yajur Veda but mentioned reverently by the Brahmanas, Gopatha, Shatapatha, Taittiriya, not to talk of the Upanishads ;

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everywhere we find the same phrase 'it is so affirmed by the Rik (*tad richa abhyuktam*)'.

But the triad of the Vedas is used as a symbol of the triple power of the three gods Agni, Vayu and Aditya who are said to produce Rik, Yajus and Saman on the three world-planes of the Vedic order, according to the Shatapatha (XI. 5. 8) and Aitareya Brahmanas (V. 32. 34) and among the Upanishads, notably, the Brihadaranyaka speaks of them as the out-breathing of the Supreme Being. To come to the significance: Agni is the Vicar, whose voice goes forth to the gods. He is the Divine officiating priest, Hota; he is the Lord of Riks, of the Vak; all Rik is the Voice that describes the glory of the gods and unfolds their truths, flames up to them and reaches the abode of Heaven, Swar. Surya is the Lord of Swar, he is the producer of the Saman, the Creator who by the sweet harmonies of the music lulls the soul, the sacrificer amidst the gods into the rhythmic ecstasy of the bliss of truth—he is the Udgātā. In between the Earth with Agni and Swar with Aditya lies the Mid-region where functions Vayu the Universal Life, the Master of all activity and executive head of all energies needed for the fulfilment of the sacrifice, of the journey; he is the lord of the Yajus which represents the most active principle of the sacrifice—therefore he is the Adhwaryu priest. We could thus see why the Yajus is considered the most important of all the Vedas for Yajna. If by the Riks, worship by conscious voice (*archana*) is effected, and if by Saman, worship by devotional ecstasy (the *gana udgitha*) the music of the soul is aimed at, then it is by Yajus, worship by action (*yajana*) is carried out. These are the three gods, Agni, Vayu and Aditya who are the divine priests officiating at the sacrifice as Hota, Adhwaryu and Udgata active in their respective spheres, of Rik, Yajus and Saman for their respective instrumentation in the sacrifice; and that is the true sacrifice which is the inner one whose values are portrayed in the symbols of the exoteric worship by the common and the uninitiated, by the laity.

Dharma Mimamsa

In the earlier section we have stated the symbolic character of the sacrifice including some of its chief elements. Here we have referred to the inner sense of the Vedic Trayi as understood by the Vedists in general and by the Brahmanas in particular. But there is a school of thought represented by the Dharma Mimamsakas who investigate into the meaning of the Vedas by which term they mean both the Mantras and the Brahmanas. They come to certain conclusions which are as unintelligible as their starting assumptions and are diametrically opposed to the basic principles that govern our enquiry into the secret of the Veda. For we carry on our investigation into the inner sense and true spirit of the Veda with special reference to the Rik Samhita. But their labours are directed towards fixing the rules for interpreting the Vedic texts, chiefly the Brahmanas. It is necessary here to state their standpoint and explain it in the light of what we have already stated concerning the Adhwaryu Veda. We are concerned only with the fundamental principle with which they start, that all Veda is the basis of Dharma; for that is also a principle which we accept without reserve, but only in our sense of the term. When

they say that the source of Dharma is the Veda, what is meant is that knowledge of Dharma can be got only from the Veda. Now the question is: what is the nature of Dharma that the Veda teaches? It is admitted on all hands that Yajna, sacrifice, is the supreme Vedic Dharma and that consists in offering to the gods part of one's possessions and even all that one has, as is done in the *Vishwajit Yaga*. The sacrificer reaps the fruit of his Vedic karma; it falls to him spontaneously in the proper time by virtue of an unseen power called *apurva*, that the work carries with it. We need not proceed further, nor is it our purpose to deal with their doctrines, their conception of heaven, of the gods, the nature of the mantras, the eternality of the Veda, the logical necessity of positing a soul in the body, the absence of any necessity for God, the downright and absolute realism of the world as a matter of fact, etc., etc.

Now what precisely is this Dharma, knowledge of which the Veda alone is said to give? If it is the ceremonial sacrifice, Yajna, that is really the truth of Dharma that all Veda reveals, then, it was never applied and is never applicable to all peoples and in all ages, but was confined to a corner of the globe peopled necessarily by a portion of mankind and even then, only by certain sections alone of the community that could perform the sacrifice, follow the Dharma. It is obvious, then, that such a Dharma is not universal, nor is it eternal either. But this much must be said that it is the ritualists of a later day—the Dharma Sutrakaras—who, drawing upon the Brahmanas for their support, for their congregational sessions and community of religious fellowship systematised the ways and means of guarding the Dharma of their conception and called them the command of the Veda, the *vidhi*. This conception of *yajna* as *shrouta dharma* gave rise to many *dharma*s called *smarta*, which served the purpose of a standing constitution for social polity, social religion, statecraft and all branches of human activity. All this may have had its utility, but the original error was neither recognised nor rectified and that error lies in that the ritualistic explanation and use of the Mantra was the main purpose of the Veda or the main Veda itself.

We could now clearly see how the inclusion of the Brahmanas in the Krishna Yajus Samhita has gradually ended in eclipsing the true and inner meaning of Yajna which is the real *shrouta dharma*. It has left a legacy, certainly not favourable to later Hindu thought. For all great leaders of spiritual and philosophical thought in later times had to reckon with the conception current in their times as an established fact, that 'the name Veda applies to Mantra and Brahmana' (*mantra-brahmanayor vedanamadheyam*, says Apastamba).

But once we look into the inner meaning of Yajna, keeping separately the outer sacrifice as symbolic, then its universal character becomes plain and the fact becomes patent that that is the truth of the Eternal Creative Spirit, the Law of Sacrifice, Yajna-dharma by which the Purusha offered the substance of his own Being for the world-creation. For what else is the meaning of the famous Purusha-sukta? Nor is this a solitary instance in the Rig Veda which gives us the idea of creation by the Purusha-sacrifice, though the language is comparatively easier and the Vedic imagery is still maintained in some form therein. Everywhere in the hymns when the Rishi calls upon the gods to accept his offering, he

knows that he is leaving behind the human, the mortal in him to that extent, for that is taken up and displaced by the gods accepting him and his offering. If by the sacrifice the mortal becomes the immortal, the gods of the Veda, the Cosmic Powers also take their second birth in man, *dwi-janma*. This is the law of interchange, the secret of yajna, by which the Creation and every part of it subsists. There is everywhere a subtle transaction of give and take. But it is a spiritual commerce that is the essence of the Vedic Yajna known to the Vedic Rishi who is often face to face with the gods, addresses them as his friends and enters into intimate relation with them. It is this true but lost sense of the Yajna that the Gita recovers for us and expresses it in its characteristic way. It will be a perversion of truth to say that the Vedas do not reveal such ideas concerning the sacrifice, but that it is the Gita that develops these ideas and reads this meaning into the Vedic Yajna. It is true that it is a Vedantic scripture that aims at reconciling many systems of spiritual and philosophical thought ; and this requires, as the Gita reveals, great wisdom and deep thought and firm grasp of the truth and adherence to it, absolutely free from the questionable tendency of foisting its own or new ideas upon old texts—and that will be either falsehood or wrong understanding from both of which we can claim freedom for the Gita, this world-scripture. We must note that the Gita does not compromise on principles. When it condemns the Vedists who say that there is nothing else than the sacrifice, *i.e.*, the Vedic ceremonials, it boldly condemns ritualism for its claim to be the sole meaning and the true spirit of the Veda. (II. 42). Even then, it does not condemn the Karma, the Vedic rites as such, if those who adhere to their religious custom perform it with faith. People to whom knowledge is dangerous shall not be disturbed in their ignorance, it says (III. 26). When it mentions the Veda reverently, it does so for the obvious reason that the Mantras are sacred, revelations of Truth, treasures of spiritual wisdom, of God-knowledge (XV. 15). We may remark in passing that even in the later Dharma shastras the idea of a symbolic meaning of the Vedic rituals, and of a spiritual sense attached to the sacrifice is not altogether lost. There is an interesting verse in Manu Smriti (XII. 87) which mentioning the rites that one should perform says that all these rites are included and implied totally in the Vedic Karma Yoga. The text calls the Vedic rituals as Karma Yoga in the Gita style. Thus the tradition that the Vedic sacrifice has an inner meaning can be found recorded frequently in the Mahabharata and the Puranas though its origins are to be traced to the Brahmanas themselves. It is only when those who came later claimed for the Brahmanas a supreme place in the Veda and as the Veda, and that the exoteric meaning of the sacrifice was the sole Dharma, the high religion of the Veda, a complete, almost effective departure from the original path of Vedic wisdom was made and the Mantra became a hand-maid of the Brahmanas for the purposes of unthinking priestcraft.

We have shown how the Dharma Mimamsa was developed out of the idea that the Vedas are the source of knowledge of Dharma which in its pristine form for the outward mind was nothing but the performance of the sacrifice. As the Veda was understood to mean Brahmanas including the Mantra, the supremacy of Yajna as the sole creed of the Vedas was established in the minds of the people of the age in general

and the priests in particular. It was thus that ritualism came to be represented by the Mimamsakas in later times beginning with Jaimini. The Vedic sacrifice was established as the sole Vedic creed, at any rate in theory and in dialectical warfare. 'In theory' we have to say because even reputed Mimamsakas did not, because could not, stick to their position in practice as the ritualistic creed of sacrifice could not satisfy the hunger of the soul for spiritual uplift. So they were Mimamsakas for dialectical professions, but Vedantins in faith, with the apology that Karma (that is Vedic rite) is to be performed without attachment for purposes of one's own purification as that makes way for competency to enter the path of knowledge. But this is a later reconciliation, or an excuse for it. The orthodox Mimamsaka will not tolerate the idea that there is any knowledge possible or worthy of a Vedist other than that of Dharma which lies in the knowledge of how to perform the sacrifice.

Whatever may be the extraordinarily unreasonable position they take up as regards this their creed of ritualism, they are skilled debaters, matter-of-fact realists, ingenious in explaining inconvenient texts for the purpose of maintaining their stand that the Vedas are self-existent, uncreated—every word and syllable. An instance may be cited here before proceeding to the next question. For it is interesting and has a kindred bearing upon our approach to the study of the Veda. When they say that the Vedas are eternal, naturally one would expect that according to them there can be no proper names of persons and places or mention of any actual incidents anywhere in the Vedas. Shabaraswamin, the commentator on Jaimini takes up the question, cites the name Babara Pravahani, son of Pravahana. He says it is not the name of any person at all, it is a common name, a chance coincidence that it resembles a proper name. Babara, he says, is an onomatopoeic word,¹ which is a substantive to which Pravahani is attributive which means that which causes something else to carry or flow (*yah pravahayati*). Therefore both the words denote an eternal object. Here it may mean the *babara* sound caused by the wind. Again he takes a passage of Taittiriya Samhita and explains that it is to be understood figuratively, *gauna*.² 'Prajapati the creator drew out his own omentum, and placed it in the Fire; thence the goat arose; it is thus that people get cattle.' Let us follow the interpretation. 'Prajapati must be some eternal object, wind, sky or sun; it drew out the omentum which is the rains, wind or the rays (respectively); fire in which it was thrown is lightning or the earthly fire; the goat is the food, seed or creeper; using it, men get possession of cattle (Shabara on Jaimini I. 2-10). This is one of the many instances of the Mimamsakas resorting to this kind of explanation of what is apparently

¹ Shabara on Jaimini I. 1.31 "बबर इति शब्दानुक्तिः ।

तेन यो नित्योऽर्थस्तमेवैतौ शब्दौ वदिष्यतः ॥

² Shabara on Jaimini I. 2-10 प्रजापतिरात्मनो वपां उदखिददिति...नित्यः कश्चिदर्थः प्रजापतिः स्यात् वायुराकाश आदित्यो वा । स आत्मनो वपामुदखिददिति वृष्टिं वायुं रश्मिं वा । तां अग्नौ प्रागृह्णात्, वैद्युते आर्चिषे लौकिके वा । ततोऽज इत्यन्नं बीजं वीरुद्धा । तमालभ्य तमुपयुज्य प्रजाः पशून् प्राप्नोतीति गौणाः शब्दाः ॥

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an occurrence historical or fanciful—an explanation which involves the admission that the Vedic language—here it is the Brahmanas—is often figurative, symbolic or allegorical. But the result of their imaginative thinking and subtle skill in handling the text is the mouse of the proverbial mountain's labour. They accept the symbolic and figurative character of the Vedic language and the significance of allegorical passages, but all for establishing the supremacy of ritualism as the sole great creed of the self-existent, eternal sentences and words and letters of the Brahmanas and the Mantras, *i.e.*, the Vedas! We have had to deal at some length with this one aspect of the Mimamsaka doctrine of the Vedas because it was found necessary to remove the wrong notions entertained by Indians of modern education, even by leaders of Indian thought known for clear thinking and brilliant exposition of abstruse philosophical subjects. Therefore it must be borne in mind that the system of Purva Mimamsa is not the authority on the Vedic interpretation. If the Veda means pre-eminently the Brahmanas and their offshoots, the Shrauta sutras and the Dharma shastras, then the system of Purva Mimamsa is the authority; if on the other hand, the Veda means the Mantra Samhitas, Rik or Yajus, casting their glory reflected on the Brahmanas, if only for the latter's seeking the support and use of Vedic Mantras for their ritualism, then the Mimamsa is no longer an authority on the interpretation of the Vedic Mantras; for the system itself does not lay claim to and is absolutely innocent of any aspiration for knowledge of the soul or God or of the path hewn out and trod by the Rishis—and yet these are the thought substance, the drift of the doctrine of the ancient mystics as hymned in the Rig Veda.

The Mantra

The Riks therefore are the Mantras in metrical form to which we look up for a knowledge of what the Rishis thought and lived for and left behind for others prepared to know and follow them. They are certainly poetical compositions, if one would choose to call them so, but it must be clearly understood that they are not literary compositions of the kind we are familiar with, nor are these poets composers such as are quite common everywhere in the world or in our own age. It is not only the age-old tradition that affirms but the hymns themselves proclaim that they are Mantras packed with thoughts related to subtle laws and truths of an inner existence, of the worlds of a different order, larger and wider, governed by the Cosmic godhead to which man could have access if he chooses to enter the path. These Mantras are called *seeings*, Mantra-drishti; and he who sees is the *seer*, Rishi, Mantra-drashta. And he not only sees but finds the right word to express his truth-perceptions. Then, he is not merely a *Kavi*, seer of what transcends the normal understanding, *kranta-darshi* but hears the revealed word of inspiration; therefore is a Satya-shrut. This *seeing* and *hearing* of the Rishi are not of the ordinary kind, but of a special order far above and superior to that which is possible for a poet of the highest intellectual mind, or of the intensest emotional vigour and passionate appeal and highly refined aesthetic sense and skill. For this reason it is improper to class the

Vedic hymns with the poetry of a literary kind of later times. Another reason for the high value attached to the Vedic hymn is its *mantra* character. For it has a power all its own, even when the idea it conveys is in our judgement not too high or the language not highly poetical or deep in feeling and strikingly rhythmic in its diction. It is this faith in the power of the Mantra that has left its impress on and taken deep roots in the soul of the race from the Vedic times to our own days, so strongly that all the teachers of later days and their followers and all systems of philosophy also preserved and revered the tradition of the Mantra-power even to the extent of holding that there was no necessity of enquiring into the meaning of the Mantra for realising its power. For from the ancient times the Mantra was regarded as an extraordinary means of achieving worldly ends also, not merely the other-worldly or spiritual and inner results. Some of the Vaidiks, Sayana among them included, say that the Veda is an uncommon means of realising what is desired and warding off what is undesirable (*ishta-prapti-anishta-pariharayor alaukika upayah vedah*). This is because the Vedic mystics who were mainly interested in things spiritual 'were also what we would call occultists, men who believed that by inner means outer as well as inner results could be produced, that thought and word could be so used as to bring about realisations of every kind'. That is why while most of the hymns are used—and according to the Yajnikas all are meant for sacrificial purposes, there are many which have no place in the sacrifice at all. Thus it is that the Mantras are sacred not because of their mere antiquity but of their intrinsic merit; they are precious for their purifying strength, the potential efficacy and the sublime spirit of the thoughts that they embody—according to some and in a certain sense—for their being the sound-substance and body of the gods they proclaim—*Mantramayi Devata*. But the real greatness, the secret of the Mantra lies in the fact that the thought substance, the rhythm and sound-body are not created by the human mind, they are there in the supreme *akasha*, Space or Ether (*paramam vyoma*) where dwell the gods (I. 164-31). The Vedic Kavi, the seer-poet catches it, as we may say, and by means of his heart and mind acting in unison carves and fashions it; his effort lies in diving deep into the oceanic being within (*antah-samudra*), and from there, effortless, see and hear and hold the Mantra, bring it out new-shaped, made audible to the physical hearing, finding for the superhuman word and rhythm a fuller expression in the form of this human speech. According to the ancient mystics the human speech which is the last and the physical stage here in the downward course taken by the Voice, Vak (I. 164-45) passes through three stations or planes, starting from the *parama vyoma* before it finds its destination here in the outer human instrument. This is the thought we must note, for we find many references to the Rishis seeing and hearing, composing and carving of the Mantras; at the same time we find the Riks mentioned as abiding in a high region along with the gods. This is also the meaning of the traditional belief that the Vedas are not made, but seen by the Rishis who are seers and not authors. And because the *paramam vyoma* is not a creation of any one, but was there before the appearance and disappearance of the Rishis, the Veda itself came to be understood as eternal, self-existent. In fact, there is only one Rik of the seer Virupa in the whole of the Rik Samhita which

refers to the Vak meaning Mantra as eternal, *nitya* (VIII. 64.6). It is, indeed, so spoken of in the sense explained above. But it is ludicrous that this single Rik is quoted by the later day ritualist (not the Brahmanas) to show that every word and syllable of the Brahmanas and Mantras is eternal. We may here note in passing the view about the eternity of the Vedas held by the author of the Mahabhashya. Patanjali could not be accused of unorthodoxy, whose reverence for the Vedas cannot be questioned as is evident from the first Ahnika of his literary monument. In explaining the sutra (IV. 3. 101) he raises an argument and answers that the order of the letters, words and sentences are not at all uncreated, or eternal, but that they are made by the Rishis. In effect, he ascribes to the Rishi the authorship of the arrangement of the words etc. while the truth and the ideas referring to them are not created, but seen by the Rishi. That the Rik *i.e.*, the Mantra is not an ordinary literary composition is evidenced by the hymns of Dirghatamas and Virupa above referred to and there are other instances which can be multiplied. The meaning of the Rik cannot be perceived by the ordinary mind and this is clearly mentioned by Yaska (II. 11; XIII. 13); he says that the Mantra, called 'Brahman' in the Veda presented itself before the Rishi in *tapasya* and that whoever is not a Rishi cannot understand the meaning of the Rik. The Brihat Devata, a little later than, almost contemporaneous with, Yaska's Nirukta tells us the same thing in quite a characteristic way; it sums up in a few verses the power and extraordinary nature of the Mantra, the distinctive insight and mystic knowledge of the Rishi, the special purpose of the Vedic triad, Rik, Yajus and Saman, and the power and the efficacy of the rituals properly performed. As it is interesting and puts briefly all that is necessary for us to know about what the later sages like Shaunaka, to whom the authorship of Brihat Devata is ascribed, say, we shall give the substance of these verses here. These are the dicta :

'The Mantra is not perceptible to one who is not a Rishi' (as it is a known fact that he is a Rishi who sees the Mantra, what is meant here is that only a Rishi can know the real sense or the hidden meaning of the Mantra) (Cf. Rig Veda, V. 81, 1).

'He knows the gods who knows the Riks. They are to be approached through Yoga with self-control and skill, understanding, general knowledge and above all *tapasya*.'

'He knows the sacrifice who knows the Yajus.'

'He knows the essential truths who knows the Samans.'

'The deity does not accept (lit. long for) the libation offered in ignorance.'

'He is like a god worthy of praise in heaven even by the gods who is pure and studies the Veda with knowledge of the gods and Mantra.'

'Desiring the attainment of the objects the Rishis of yore hied towards the deities with the Mantras (Chhandas), so say the great seers themselves in the Veda.'³

³ बृहद्देवता VIII. 129. "न प्रत्यक्षमनुषेरस्ति मन्त्रम् ॥" (आर्षम्)

VII. 130 "योगेन दान्द्येण दमेन बुद्ध्या बाहुभृत्येन तपसा नियोगैः ।

उपास्यास्ताः कृत्स्नशो देवता या ऋचो ह यो वेद स वेद देवान् ॥

We must now reiterate the fact that though the true sacredness and power of the Veda lies in its inner and spiritual meaning of the revealed word, of the inspired voice of the seer, it has lent itself for other uses which are other than sacrificial. And this fact is the basis of the tradition that common objects in life can be achieved by uncommon means ; and this is also the meaning of fairly ancient works dealing with the uses that can be made of the hymns, such as the Rig-vidhana ascribed to Shaunaka. Indeed, even in the earlier times, as Yaska states, the Mantras were not considered to be uniform in their objects. Understood in the exoteric interpretation the Mantras contain ideas which are uneven; high and low, (*uchchavacha*) and meant for diverse purposes. 'This is confirmed by the Brihat Devata. 'The Rishi addresses the gods directly in some hymns, refers to them indirectly in others. There is censure, praise, swearing, curse, benediction. There are certain hymns which are clearly spiritual'—so says Yaska and cites instances of Riks to illustrate the same. So does the Brihat Devata also. But all this is true when the outer garb alone is looked at and the inner sense is not known or is ignored. This is also the reason why there has been talk about the heterogeneous character of the Vedic hymns. But once we accept the inner sense and the secret speech, the whole body of the hymns presents a sublime picture, spiritual and mystic in its import and homogeneous in the thought-spirit and the mystic principle that governs methodically the Rishi's utterances.

The Secret—Internal Evidence

Now we come to what is called the secret speech of the Rishi in which is concealed the thought content of the Mantra. We shall later see that quite often the secret lies in the thought so covered with an image or symbol that to a superficial mind the truth that is symbolised does not rouse the suspicion of its very presence, while the symbols generally make some sense applicable to the sacrifice or to the gross existence around, the workings of the forces of Physical Nature ; or at best to an extremely ignorant and crude intelligence, the sense conveyed may refer to some invisible super-human person or persons who just appear to the mortals in the guise of Fire, Wind, Waters or Ocean, Storm, Lightning, Rains, Sun and other objects he sees around in the physical Universe. Let us see if the Rishis had any secret speech ; and when we find sufficient grounds to declare that the seers of the Rig Veda themselves referred to a secret speech

131 मन्त्राणां देवताविद् य प्रयुङ्क्ते कर्म कर्हिचित् ।

जुषन्ते देवतास्तस्य हविर्नादेवताविदः ॥

132 अविज्ञानप्रदिष्टं हि हविर्ने हेत दैवतम् ।

तस्मान्मनसि संयम्य देवतां जुहुयाद्धविः ॥

133 स्वाध्यायमपि योऽधीते मन्त्रदैवतविच्छुचिः ।

स सत्रसदिव स्वर्गे सत्रसद्भिरपीड्यते ॥

137 अर्थेऽस्रवः खल्वृषयः छन्दोभिर्देवताः पुरा ।

अभ्यधावन्निति च्छन्दो मध्ये त्वाद्गुर्महर्षयः ॥

used in their inner transaction with the gods, then we can readily turn to the symbols with which they covered the secret.

When we come across words in the Rig Veda which are used to denote whatever is hidden or secret or mysterious, we find a number of instances where what is secret or hidden and therefore not visible happens to be a hostile power or a god, a place, a world or worlds ; also quite often the word, the Name, the voice of appeal invoking the presence or favour of a god is spoken of as secret, concealed or inwardly kept, placed, guarded in the secret cave, *guha*, the heart, *hrit*. *Ninyam* is one of the half a dozen words given by Yaska as synonyms of what is secret or inwardly kept or closed and invisible, *antarhitam*. We shall take up the word and see the contexts in which it is used and show that the Rishis openly used this word to denote that there was a secret in their speech that was concealed from the outward minds ordinary or profane. Fortunately for us, Sayana is unusually consistent in giving the same meaning 'lost to appearance' (*antarhitam*) to the word *ninyam* wherever it occurs, though whenever possible or necessary he makes out a different sense of the passage in question. It may or may not be warranted even for the purpose of ritualistic interpretation. In one place he has given a different meaning without giving any authority which he usually does for support either from the Nirukta for the word-meaning or from the Brahmanas for legends. It will be interesting to note why he gives the meaning 'nameless' to the word *ninyam* here. The seer Hiranyastupa in his hymns to Indra makes mention of Indra's foe (Vritra) smitten by Indra ; as a result Vritra's body fell, cast to a long sleep—that body of tamas, darkness ; it could not be seen, it went deep down and the ceaseless waters flowed over it. (I. 32. 10.) Now, here even if Sayana says 'disappeared' it would be enough for the legendary or naturalistic interpretation. For when the clouds received the terrible stroke from Indra's thunderbolt, the waters were released, the body of the coverer fell dead, going deep down while the waters were flowing over it. We do not understand why *ninyam* is interpreted as 'nameless' and not as the usual 'concealed' or 'lost to sight'. Sayana says that the Vritra was so thoroughly dead that his very name as an entity was lost or forgotten and therefore he—no, his body—is nameless. He seems to make a concession to Yaska who says with reference to this Rik (Nirukta, II. 16) *ninyam nirnāman* ; but the pity is that he left the explanation of the *nirnāman* to his commentator Durga who says that it refers to a place where no more 'bending low' was possible (*nam* to bow or bend low); and the Vritra's body went so deep down beneath the waters that there was no room for him to go still lower. Sayana thought the *nirnāman* of Yaska was the same as *nir-nāmadheyam* and found an explanation for the body to become nameless since it fell dead and the name is known to none. We can clearly see that this far-fetched explanation is unnecessary even for his purpose, but such instances are numerous in Sayana's explanations of the Riks. *Ninyam* is clearly *antarhitam*, concealed, not visible, secret. But in Kutsa's hymn to Agni, Sayana explains the word as secret. There the Rishi asks 'Who among you knows this secret one? The Child by the law of his own being brought forth the Mothers'.⁴ It is not only when the Asura Vritra's body sinks down and

⁴ R.V. I. 95.4 "क इमं वो निगयं आचिकेत वत्सो मातृर्जनयत स्वधाभिः ।"

disappears that *ninyam* is used to denote the place of secrecy, it is also applied to the God Agni who lives *secret* in the waters and the forests. A place or world also is described as hidden or secret. Kashyapa addresses the God Soma, 'All the gods, the thrice-eleven are lodged in thy *secret* abode'.⁵ The soul also is described as kept a *secret* from the out-going mind. Thus says Dirghatamas, 'I know not if I am this (what really I am); a mystery am I, and bound, I move about, with the mind'.⁶ In the hymns of the Vasishthas, the intuitions of the heart or direct perceptions are mentioned as the means by which one walks towards the Secret which spreads in thousand branches.⁷ In another hymn Vasishtha says referring to the Maruts, their forms and activities, 'Only a *seer* knows these *secrets*'.⁸ In addressing Mitra and Varuna he says 'Oh, Showerers (of benefits) undeluded are you, and all-pervading, these words of praise are for you, there is nothing wondrous in them, nor even worship (the outward sacrifice, *yaksham*); but the untruthful praises of men serve as offences (or follow and serve the hurters). But our *secret* words of praise reach your knowledge (i.e., they cannot be concealed from your knowledge)'.⁹ These illustrations of the meaning of *ninyam* according to Sayana himself go to show beyond doubt that it is used in the sense of anything that is not apparent or visible, anything concealed or mysterious or knowingly kept secret. And Vasishtha's Rik just referred to frankly says that his words of praise are *secret* words which the gods know because they are not and cannot be concealed from the gods, but only from the outward mind, from the common run of men, are they kept secret. Sri Aurobindo draws pointed attention to the phrase of Vamadeva, *ninya vachamsi*; the *seer* says definitely, 'Oh Agni, Disposer, to thee who knowest these *secret* words, fructuous, I have uttered, I have sung, enlightened, with thoughts and prayers'.¹⁰ One more reference to *ninyam* is an interesting passage where the seer Vamadeva compares Indra's drinking of the Soma to a seer discovering in *secret* the truths or things that are to be known (or the objects of inner knowledge).¹¹

Now that we have finished with almost all the important references to this word in the Riks, we may invite the reader's attention to this characteristic feature of the utterances of Vedic seers; and it lies in the idea of the 'secret' associated with certain objects—it may pertain to knowledge in general or a god or a hostile power or words or knowledge of things or truths. But there are in the Riks other words also to convey the sense of secret. It is necessary to make mention of a few instances

⁵ R.V. IX. 92.4 "तव त्वे सोम पवमाने निगये विश्वे देवा अधिसानौ ॥"

⁶ R.V. I. 164.37 "न विजानामि यदि वेद मस्मि निगयः सन्नद्धो मनसा चरामि ।"

⁷ R.V. VII. 33.9 "तं इन्निरयं हृदयस्य प्रकेतैः सहस्रवल्शमभिसंचरन्ति ।"

⁸ R.V. VII. 56.4 "एतानि धीरो निगया चिकेत पृथिन्यदूधो महीजभार ॥"

⁹ R.V. VII. 61.5 "अमूरा विश्वा वृषणा...न वां निगया अचिते अभूवन्"

(सायनः—निगयानि रहस्यानि स्तोत्राणि)

¹⁰ R.V. IV. 3.16 "एता विश्वा विदुषे वेधो नीथानि अग्ने निगया वचांसि"

¹¹ IV. 16.3 "कविर्न निगयं विदथानि साधन्"

where *guhya*, *guha*, *apichya* and in some cases *pratichya* are used to describe the secret speech. We know that the Riks have different appellations based on their use which cannot be translated into any other tongue, though most of them can be explained by paraphrasings. These are *uktha*, *shastra*, *stoma*, *gir*, *vak*, *vani*, *brahman*, *mantra* etc. But the word *Nama* is little understood to mean *stotra* also. There are instances when it is used to denote words of praise addressed to the deity, words in the formula of the secret speech. *Nāma* is undoubtedly name. But the name of a god in the Veda is much more than a means of distinguishing him from other gods. It carries a power of appeal to the god in question. It is a means by which one bows down, offers himself submissive (*namana-sadhanam* in the phrase of Sayana, literally means of 'bending low') to the gods, evoking their response. *Nama* therefore in many places is used in the sense of words of submission. At the same time it is often used as placed in the *guha*, cave, and as concealed *gudham*. Quite often we find it in association with *apichya* which like *ninyam* means secret or covered or mysterious. Let us make mention of a few instances where the secret name or the secret speech is denoted by *apichyam nāma*. Gritsamada hymns, 'They increase the charming face and the secret name of him the Child of Waters'.¹² Nabhaka, the seer, praises Varuṇa, 'He who is the supporter of the worlds, who knows the Names of the Rays, mysterious, hidden in the cave—he is the seer-poet, he nourishes the poet-wisdoms as Heaven does the manifold form'.¹³ Again in the same hymn there is another verse referring to 'the mysterious ocean' *samudra apichya*. Kavi Bhargava sings, "The Son upholds the secret Name of the Father and the Mother in the luminous Heaven".¹⁴ Sayana distinctly interprets *Nama* to mean word of praise *stotra* in VII. 22. 5. 'Words of thy praise I ever utter'; again in VIII. 11. 5. 'Mortals, we adore thee for we know the wide Name, *stotra*'.¹⁵

Instances are numerous enough to show that the Name is a word of appeal to the particular personality of the godhead and it is also used to denote the Mantra or words of adoration. In both the senses it is often spoken of as secret or concealed or mysterious. Occasionally the word *pratichi*, one of the synonyms of 'secret' is used. But it is a word that can be taken to mean 'confronting' or 'turned inwards'. In classical Sanskrit, in the latter sense this Vedic word is in currency as in the case of *pratyag-atma*, the inner self. *Pratyañ-mukha* and *Parañ-mukha* are common terms meaning 'face (i.e., mind) turned inward and outward'. What has been shown is enough to indicate clearly the secret character of the language used by the Vedic Rishis. And this secret lies in the symbolic veil over the thought content of the Riks. We have earlier

¹² II. 35-11 "तदस्यानीकं उत चारुनाम अपीच्यं"

¹³ VIII. 41.5 "यो धर्ता भूवनानां...अपीच्या वेदनामानि गुह्या ।"

¹⁴ IX. 75.2 "ऋतस्य जिह्वा पवते...दधाति पुनः पित्रोरपीच्यं नाम..."

¹⁵ VIII. 11.5 "मर्त्या अमर्त्यस्य ते भूरिनाम मनामहे ।

विप्रासो जातवेदसः ॥"

बृहद्देवता VII. 67-72

spoken of the system of double values in which the Vedic seers arranged their ideas. Now we may recall to mind that the inner thought is the true and intended sense while the outer is kept as the symbol meant to cover it and at the same time to image it. This does not at all mean that every Rik throughout the Rik Samhita contains symbols for the outer meaning to act as veil over the inner truth. For there are instances where no symbol at all is necessary and yet a double sense is conveyed ; and this is because the words used have often a double meaning. We may cite, for example, *dhi* which means first and foremost 'thought' in the Veda as in classical Sanskrit ; but in the Veda *dhiyah* is taken in the sense of 'works' *karmani* also, so that the latter meaning is given to it wherever it is convenient to the ritualist in preference to the former which is naturally adopted in the esoteric interpretation. It is not proposed to exhaust the list of similar words which are psychological terms used as such in the inner sense and which has in some cases, not in all, an appearance of outer meanings used justifiably for the purposes of the exoteric worship of the Vedic times. Ketu, Kratu, Shravas, Ritam are some of the outstanding terms ; they denote intellectual judgment or intuitive perception, will with wisdom, or resolve, inspiration or inner audience, Truth or Right respectively, while in the outer garb they are ray, sacrifice, fame (quite often food, according to Sayana) and water or sacrifice or any other meaning, not always consistently applied or applicable to all instances and in all contexts. But in the inner sense these and similar terms are understood invariably in the same sense. And this is the strength of the position taken for discovering the truth of the secret speech of the Vedic seers. But there are other terms which are not psychological but are images and figures of truths, ideas and things of the inner world. Cow (*Go*) in the Veda means both Light and the quadruped and in the esoteric sense always an image of Light. A few of the other figures may be cited here for example : the Horse is the symbol of power, the Waters of life and the energies of cosmic principles ; the rivers, the ocean, the hill, the plateau, the cave, *guha*—these are all, respectively images of the nourishing and creative forces, the infinite substance out of which emerges the Sun of truth, the manifested existence rising from the Physical towards a higher order of being, level or plane of being or consciousness, the secret spot, generally the heart of things and of man in particular. When we look straight at these symbols it would require no effort at all to understand the natural significance of these images taken from their environments by the seer-poets of the Rig Veda. The unsophisticated mind of the age was quite naturally impressed by the *immensity* of the ocean, by the *ceaseless flowing* of the rivers that fertilises the soil, by the *life-giving* principle of water (called *jivanam* in later Sanskrit), by many an other object of the Physical universe and the natural phenomena that corresponded to those of the inner Nature which the Rishi was occupied with exploring in his spiritual venture. It was a spontaneous choice of these images that the poet made for giving expression to the ideas and truths that he received and held and communicated to others in the course of his soul's journey towards the Godhead. This is the supreme use of the symbols that they leave the impress of the truths that are contained in them, for they are natural in that no quality or property alien to the object used as a symbol is imposed upon them. Literary progress

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of later times in spite of the high boast of our intellect—or because of it—has not outgrown the use of the images to carry home the thought substance, and feeling of the truth represented by the word. It was a great blessing of the Vedic age that feeling and understanding, what we would call heart and mind, were habitually not at variance with one another, as they later came to be in the age of intellect when the mind began to search for what is called 'the abstract' and the heart for 'the concrete'. We are often possessed of a mistaken notion that there are concrete and abstract truths—this is a sort of intellectual vanity—and that the concrete is the mundane existence and the abstract are mere ideas in the void. The fact is that ideas are always abstract but not the truths they attempt to represent. But truth as an idea may be abstract, and as the mundane existence known to us may be concrete ; but it is neither exclusively the concrete of our perception nor the abstract of our conception. But it is in itself substantial of which what we call the concrete is a superficial presentation and the abstract is nothing but a distant shadow of mind without substance. The Rishis, then, had in them a happy blending of thought and feeling and the question of concrete and abstract truths and ideas does not arise at all ; the symbol they use is a direct vehicle of thought and feeling more effective than any conventional language. But it must be noted that there are different kinds of symbols, some may be classed together by virtue of their being images provided by nature in the Physical universe. It is this group of symbols that we referred to in the examples of ocean and rivers and mountains and the rest, and this also is the kind that we mostly come across in the Vedic hymns, and which is fairly sufficient if we care to take the hint to guide us to read their correct significance.

But there are other kinds of images which do not belong to the Physical universe but to a different order of cosmic existence, to a subtle plane of being—let us call them supra-physical, but on that account not less concrete—quite substantial in their kind, visible to the inner vision of the Rishi ; and these also he used for self-expression in the Mantra. In such cases these images themselves convey the idea, the truth they carry with them, directly, and no human speech is necessary to interpret the symbolic character of the figures so perceived ; for the vehicle of thought and feeling is the symbolic image itself which is there the direct language, as we may say. To such groups belong some of the forms of the Vedic gods, their vehicles, *vahanas*, their colours and movements described in the hymns.

We may note in passing that symbols of various kinds were always in vogue in the religious rites and worship of the earlier races in other countries also and not only in India. Certain symbols are geometrical expressions—circle, triangle, square and other figures. We now know that the Cross was there as a symbol long before Jesus Christ. But the bases of these symbols, it must be borne in mind, are to be found in the inner and the psychic grounds, they are visions, signifying certain truths to the inner and awakened intelligence of the disciple of the secret path. Symbolism as a device of religious worship continued in India in the post-Vedic age also and still continues to our own days though the symbols and their significances and bases have varied and are absolutely different

in some important respects. So much for symbolism with special reference to the hymns of the Rig Veda.

III

Yaska and Others Testify

We have had occasions to refer to Yaska, but so far we have not mentioned the kind of help we receive for our way of understanding the hymns. There is a double aspect of the Nirukta which we have to note before proceeding to consider the question of Yaska's views in so far as they have bearing on our topic. We may state at the outset that Yaska is the author of the Nirukta that is handed down to us but not of the Nighantu—the vocabulary of the Vedic words given classified into certain groups. The latter is a collection of words taken from the Veda arranged under different heads ; and the student of the Veda was expected to get this Nighantu by heart as he did the Vedas, though its importance is next only to the Vedic texts themselves. It is called by the sacred name of *Sam-āmnāya* a word which is applied to those Vedic texts which are learnt by heart, to Brahmanas mostly, or to the Vedas in general. As these words were gathered from the Veda and learnt by heart like the Veda, Yaska begins his work Nirukta with this word saying that 'the Nighantu called Sam-āmnāya has been cited and now it is to be explained'. Whether the Nighantu that was handed down to Yaska was as complete as it was before and when the Samhitas were arranged, is a different question altogether. Like the Nighantu that came down to him, there was a school of Vedic interpreters long before Yaska who were etymologists, Nairuktas who attached great importance to the Vedic words because of their derivative significance. Yaska belongs to this school of Niruktakaras, some of whom he mentions by name e.g., Shakapuni, Audumbarayana, Aupamanyava etc. Though the etymology he gives of words is often unreliable and fantastic, the fact that the Vedic words have derivative significance is a creed with them as the very term implies (*nir-ukta*, *nir-vachana*). And this served as a strong hint to Swami Dayananda when he started the revival of Vedic learning in our own times. This aspect of the Nirukta, not in details but in principle, is an asset, and invaluable for our guidance. Yaska clearly mentions that no one without *tapasya* can make a successful attempt to know the meaning of the Mantra. This is a sure pointer to the mystical character of the Vedic language. He says that the language of the Veda is often figurative, and allegorical. 'Dawn is said to be his sister—this is stated to convey the idea of association, the language is figurative' (*ushasam asya svasaram aha, sahacharyat*, (Nirukta III. 16). When he explains the Vritra legend as a natural phenomenon of the cloud imprisoning the waters etc., he states 'These battles are described in similies, i.e., allegorically' (Nir II. 16, *upamarthe yuddhavarṇaḥ bhavanti*). That the language is figurative or the legends allegorical is a fact we can admit but in the inner sense of the figure or the allegory. His interpretation is naturalistic. When modern scholars credit Sayana with being rational for his naturalistic interpretation on many occasions, the credit must really go to the Nairuktas as repre-

sented by Yaska. But behind all his naturalism there is a strong belief lurking in him that there is a mystery about the Mantra, mystery about the Rishi who communes with the gods, and mystery about the gods themselves who are hymned. This aspect of Yaska is a factor that contributes to the justification of the line of interpretation we adopt. Above all, his reference to the gods and their threefold classification based on the three cosmic divisions of the Universe—Earth, Mid-region and Heaven is interesting and points to certain truths which, it is doubtful, if he himself grasped in their fuller significance. He speaks of the gods who are characterised by a mutuality of birth and mutuality of nature and source (*itaretara-janmanah itaretara-prakritayah*). The implication is that the nature and source of the gods and their births are interdependent—they are born, each one of the others, the origin of each is any one or all of the rest. We need not dilate upon this aspect of the truth about the gods since it offers no difficulty whatever in grasping it in our system of Vedic study. Yaska affirms as the supreme Vedic truth about the gods and quotes the relevant Riks that the Sun is the Soul of all that is mobile and immobile and that all the gods are limbs of the Great Self, Mahan Atma. All this, stated by Yaska, contributes to the help we get from recorded works for the esoteric interpretation, and what is much more, testifies to the need and correctness of our approach to the understanding of the Vedic hymns.

Before we take leave of Yaska, we may point out one characteristic feature of his work. We find a frank admission of ignorance in some cases or doubts on his part in regard to the meanings of ancient words or of verses or even of matters concerning the gods. Nowhere do we find in his work that the views of Nairuktas whom he represents are the true ones. That the same verse or fact was variously interpreted before and during his time is evident from his references to the Ritualist Yājñikas, the Etymologists *Nairuktas*, the Mythologists *Āitiḥāsikas* etc. He admits the currency of more than one interpretation of the Vedic hymns. It is a fact that he recognises the rights of other schools of thought giving their explanations of the Veda. But he is not uncritical, does not admit, much less follow unquestioningly even well-known authorities that went before him. Occasionally he points out, when he sees, errors in established and recognised authorities like Shakalya to whom is ascribed the authorship of the Padapatha of the Rik Samhita. It is interesting to note that the Brihat Devata which comes immediately after Yaska points out many errors in Yaska's splitting of the words, but like the Nirukta it also recognises various schools of thought holding their own views on the interpretation of the Vedic hymns. This work is among the earliest upon which Katyayana and others depended for information on the particular Devatas addressed or spoken of in the hymns concerned. It also testifies to the fact that there was a school which held that the hymns were to be understood in the inner and spiritual sense and so also some of the truths or facts which seemingly referred to external things. We may cite the example of *pancha janah* or the five peoples which are identified by Sayana so often with the four Varnas and the fifth, called Nishada panchama. Here are the relevant views about the *pancha janah* that the Brihat Devata records: 'Some say they are the Five Fires, others they are Men, Fathers, Gods, Gandharvas,

Uragas or Rakshasas. Shakatayana thinks that they are the four Varnas and the fifth the *nishada*. Shakapuni says they are the four main officiating priests, Ritwiks viz., Hota, Adhwaryu, Udgata, Brahma, and the sacrificer *Yajamana*. But the Atmavadins (who are for the inner meaning of the Vedas) hold that the *pancha janah* are the Sight, the Audience, the Mind, the Voice, the Life.¹⁶

The fact is now clear to us that both the Nirukta and the Brihat Devata testify to the existence of the tradition that the Vedas have an inner or spiritual meaning, though unfortunately even in their times it was only a tradition and memory of a past, but not a working faith that was in currency among the learned classes. We have already spoken of the Brahmanas which quite often treat the sacrifice in a symbolic way of their own. That again shows that they had some memory of the earlier thought that the hymns they used for sacrificial purposes had an inner meaning, spiritual and occult. The consecration ceremony in which the initiation of the sacrificer takes place is curiously symbolic ; for when the sacrificer is made to enter the place for which he is destined he is supposed to enter his own womb, for it is a new birth he is to take, a re-embodiment among the gods in heaven while he is still in the flesh. (Cf. Ait. Brahm. I. 3). At times in the beginning, in the middle on occasions, and mostly at the close, the Brahmanas which are the literature of the Yajnikas speak of the truth that the Vedic ritual by itself does not help one to ascend to That, it is only when one has Knowledge one can climb to heaven. (Shatapatha Brahm. X. 5. 4).

The Puranas, it is stated, were originally meant to amplify the meaning of the Vedas (*vedarthasya upabrimhanam*) but it would be of little use to us if most of the Puranic legends could be traced to the Vedas ; but there are certain portions there and especially of the Mahabharata which announce in unmistakable terms that certain Vedic legends have an inner meaning ; also there are other sections which in unambiguous terms speak of the symbolic way in which gods are signified. It is so interesting and has bearing on our subject that we may cite here the instance of the Vritra legend. Vyasa narrates to Dharmaputra the meaning of the Vritra legend as he learnt it from the sages. At the close is the verse which says 'Then Indra with his invisible thunderbolt slew the Vritra in the body'. Earlier Vritra is described as Tamas (Ashwamedha

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शालामुख्यः प्रणीतश्च पुत्रो गृहपतेश्च यः ।
उत्तरो दक्षिणश्चाग्निं रेता पञ्चजनाः स्मृताः ॥
मनुष्याः पितरो देवा गन्धर्वो रगराक्षसाः ।
यास्कौपमन्यवावेतान् आहतुः पञ्च वै जनान् ॥
निषादपञ्चमान् वर्णान् मन्यते शाकटायनः ।
ऋत्विजो यजमानश्च शाकपुणिस्तु मन्यते ॥
होताध्वर्युस्तथोद्गाता ब्रह्मा चेतिवदन्ति तान् ॥
चक्षुःश्रोत्रं मनोवाक् च प्राणश्चेत्यात्मवादिनः ॥

Parva XI. 7-20).¹⁷ The commentator Nilakantha says that Vajra is knowledge born of discrimination, *viveka*. Again in another place Goat (*aja*) is said to be the symbolic form of Agni, Ram (*mesha*) that of Varuna, Horse that of the Sun: Elephants, Deer, Serpents, Buffaloes are all Asuras; Cocks and Pigs are Rakshasas. (Anushasana Parva Ch. 84).¹⁸ From these citations it would be clear that in the Mahabharata are incorporated the results of attempts to discover the hidden meaning of legends of the Vedic origins and the significance of symbols.

So far we have dealt with the recorded tradition about the Vedic secret that there are behind the allegories and legends and images in the Rig Veda profound ideas of spiritual and occult truths, and that whatever may be their outer meanings and uses, it is the inner and the spiritual that are of supreme importance and that was the main preoccupation of the Rishis of the Rig Veda, the central wisdom of the ancient mystics. But the question remains: if the inner meaning of the Veda is the spiritual and that is its real import, if symbolism and double values are the key to unlock the Vedic secret, has there been none before us and after the Vedic Rishis who ever made attempts to discover the real meaning of the Riks? The answer is simple; there is no record available that goes to show that there was one. Nor has there been any attempt made by scholars to give us a complete commentary on the Vedas even from the standpoint of the Yajnikas, before Sayana. If there has been no attempt to deal with the spiritual interpretation, the reason is plain and history gives the explanation. The original epoch of the Veda was followed after a lapse of perhaps some centuries, by an age of intellectual activity which in its turn was succeeded by dearth of vigour, by a certain plunge towards darkness, a decadence or a descent into something short of death. The absence of a commentary in the light of the symbolic and spiritual sense is no more a proof that there is really no secret meaning of the Veda than the absence of a complete commentary on the Vedas before Sayana is a proof that there is no ritualistic meaning possible of the Vedic hymns. As for traditions, both the kinds have been there from the beginning. But there is a disadvantage that certainly tells upon the esoteric interpretation because of the presence and influence of Sayana's commentary and its having held sway these centuries over the minds of scholars saturated with ritualistic conceptions. Again the tradition that the Vedic hymns are supremely spiritual in their import was recovered and maintained by Anandatirtha, the Dvaita teacher known as Madhwacharya. This shows clearly that there was even before Sayana a school of Vedic

¹⁷ महाभारते अश्वमेधपर्व अध्यायः ११ श्लो० ७—२०

¹⁸ अनुशासनपर्व अध्यायः ८४, श्लो० ४७—४८

“अजोऽग्निर्वल्गो मेषः सूर्योऽश्व इति दर्शनम् ।

कुञ्जराश्च मृगा नागा महिषाश्चासुरा इति ॥

कुक्कुटाश्च वराहाश्च राक्षसा भृगुनन्दन” ।

¹⁹ “ततोवृत्रं शरीरस्थं जघान भरतर्षभ ।

शतक्रतुरदृश्येन वज्रोणेतीह नः श्रुतम्” ॥

interpreters holding that though ritual worship was part of the Vedic religion and as such the Mantras present an aspect favourable to it, yet the inner meaning of the Mantra was spiritual and the highest aim and use of the Veda was God-knowledge and attainment of the supremest end of life possible for man. Madhwacharya's work is comparatively small in volume, the language simple, but its influence among scholars modern or ancient can be judged from the fact that most modern scholars and the Pundits as a class with the possible exception of some among his followers are unaware of the very existence of such a work. His follower, the great Yogin Raghavendra Swami (after Sayana) wrote the work *Mantrarthamanjari* in which he has explained and amplified in necessary places the Rīg-bhashya of the great teacher, the founder of the Dvaita school, the Acharya Purna Prajna. He quotes an ancient Puranic text stating that the Vedas have three meanings (*trayorthah sarva-vedeshu*) and illustrates the fact in the first forty suktas of the Rīg Samhita.

It does not form part of our object to explain and discuss the bases of the three ways in which the Riks are to be understood according to this commentary. Suffice it to say that Madhwa admits: firstly, there is a ritual use for the Mantra and it bears that meaning accordingly; secondly, the Mantra is addressed to the gods whose glories are sung and each god with his special function is an instrument of the Supreme God Vishnu and has a distinct consciousness of his own as an entity and through him the Upāsaka realises some aspect of the greatness and the grace of the Supreme Lord for Moksha; thirdly, the same Mantra directly refers to the Supreme God Vishnu himself when the words of the Mantra are understood against their etymological background, *yaugika*, and that is the most natural as well as the supreme meaning. This commentary is a very interesting work and invaluable to those, especially to that section of the Pundits who would choose to learn and see more in the Rīg Veda than the sacrificial purpose and mythological ideas that are associated in their minds with the hymns of the great mystics. This again is another testimony to the sacred tradition that the Vedas are books of spiritual wisdom and have unfailingly three meanings one of which applies to the Supreme Godhead, applies to Him and Him alone without which the other two meanings are futile whatever may be the utility one may cling to in his ignorance of the high purpose of life. What is important to us is that the Acharya holds that there is an inner and spiritual meaning and that that is the supreme meaning of the Veda.

It is thus remarkable that everywhere we come across the tradition that the Veda is a secret lore. Even in the southernmost corner of the peninsula and in the early centuries of the Christian era we find the Tamil word *marai* meaning *secret*, in currency to denote the Veda.

Now where do we stand in relation to the labours of Indian scholars of our times? There are two outstanding contributions to the Vedic studies on Western lines in recent times, one of Mr. Tilak and another of Mr. Paramasiva Iyer. The former has propounded the theory of the Arctic Home of the Vedic Aryans, with sufficient internal evidence and in the light of this theory many Riks become intelligible which would otherwise remain inexplicable—in the outer interpretation. But the latter's thesis requires good deal of proving, and must be supported by internal evidences, by copious illustrations from the hymnal texts. Perhaps Mr. Iyer has hit

the mark when he says that Vritra-Ahi is Glacier. In any case, the labours of these scholars may stand help to know something of the physical surroundings in which these hymns of the Rig Veda were composed.

Apart from the translations of the numerous hymns he has given us, Sri Aurobindo has illustrated the method followed, by commenting upon 'The Selected Hymns' in the Secret of the Veda. Sayana in his introduction to the Rig-bhashya says that if one studies the first Adhyaya of the Rik Samhita with his Bhashya in accordance with the traditional instruction, the rest of the work the student can read for himself without further help. We may apply the same method to the study of the Rig Veda in its esoteric sense ; for if one grasps and ponders over the substance of the Introduction to the 'Hymns to the Mystic Fire', he will find no difficulty in understanding the hymns, translated in the inner sense. And Sayana's simple commentary, its startling imperfections notwithstanding, can be accepted in its outer sense and is also an indispensable help for studying the hymns in their esoteric aspect, once we are familiar with the psychological terms and the symbolic significance of the imagery we meet with in the hymns.

Now that we have done and come to the end, we may state a word about the religion and philosophy of the Rig Veda, so much spoken of by modern scholars. It is wrong, futile, wide of the mark, to think of the Rig Veda, even any portion of it, as a ground of philosophical speculations ; nor were the sages of the Veda thinkers of the type that philosophical system-building requires. They were seers and not thinkers ; it is a rather bold venture on our part to draw conclusions from a few hymns singled out from the last Mandala of the Rik Samhita and state that here the sages have learnt to speculate and there they have progressed in advanced thought and views. The exoteric religion of the Vedic times is admitted on all hands to be a sort of Nature-worship or we may call it pantheistic Nature-worship. It is always possible to find hymns in the Rik Samhita from which we can gather that there was Polytheism, Monotheism or Max Muller's Henotheism or even Monism. But the Rishis do not seem to have concerned themselves much about this sort of systematising. In handling their work we too can with great advantage follow them and let the gods alone separately and distinct from one another—let them subserve the Supreme Godhead of whom they are different names and aspects, or powers and personalities, or let them all combined together singling out one to be in front while keeping the rest of themselves at the back, or let them all retire together into their Supreme Source and pass into the Nameless One or to the One who is the upholder and bearer of the names of all of them, *yo devanam namadha eka eva*. There is no reconciliation necessary, for all these are matters of fact with the seers, all these are their perceptions of the Truth, nay, of the truths.

In all that we have stated here, we have shown that there are sufficient grounds for understanding the Veda in its esoteric sense ; we have pointed out the weaknesses in the system of exoteric interpretation of the hymns ; we have as a matter of course assumed that the Rishis of the Rig Veda were not unlike other ancient peoples of pre-historic times, but were capable of coherent speech, quite capable of expressing themselves clearly, and were not imbeciles agape wondering all the days of their lives at natural phenomena. Once their language is understood and use made of

the clues given in the symbolic interpretation, they present themselves to the eye of wisdom in their truer stature and "the Rig Veda ceases to be an obscure, confused and barbarous hymnal, it becomes the high-aspiring Song of Humanity ; its chants are episodes of the lyrical epic of the soul in its immortal ascension. This at least ; what more there may be in the Veda of ancient science, lost knowledge, old psycho-physical tradition remains yet to be discovered". (Sri Aurobindo in *The Doctrine of the Mystics*.)

Sri Aurobindo and Tantra*

BY BIRENDRAKISHORE ROY CHOUDHURY

(3)

PRINCIPLES OF TANTRA AND THE EVOLUTION OF NATURE

Parā Samvit, Shiva-Shakti, Sadāshiva-Ishwara-suddhāvidyā, these constitute the highest principles of the Tantra. In the higher states of sādhanā the world is seen as a manifestation of these principles. Sat, Chit, Ānanda and Vijnāna of the Upanishads and Satya, Tapah, and Maha planes of the Purānas also have reference to the world. Sri Aurobindo has accepted the Upanishadic terminology in his philosophy and has described the self-development of Sat, Chit, Ānanda Vijnāna in his *magnum opus*, "The Life Divine." From Sachchidananda down to the Supermind or Vijnāna all the principles are the direct manifestation of Parama Shiva and Adyā Shakti. There is no difference between Purushottama and Parama Shiva. Sri Aurobindo has shown three stages of the Supermind :

He first finds the inalienable unity of things, the second modifies that unity so as to support the manifestation of the Many in One and One in Many, the third further modifies it so as to support the evolution of a diversified individuality which, by the action of ignorance, becomes in us at a lower level the 'illusion of the separate ego.' "

And these three poises in Sadāshiva, Ishwara and Suddhā-Vidyā of the Tantra. Sadāshiva is the universal and impersonal unity of Purushottama, and in his personal aspect and in Suddhā-Vidyā there is the unthinkable relation of dvaitādvaita (identity *cum* difference) between Ishwara and the Jiva or the individual soul. What Sri Krishna says in the Gita, "prakritir jivabhūtā, the Supreme Nature becomes the Jiva, is due to the action of Suddhā Vidyā of the Tantra. Suddhā Vidyā or Prakriti is the Mother of all Jivas. So far extends the domain of the Supermind or Vijnāna."

For the first and second parts of the article on the subject, see pp. 72-88 and 89-100 of *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annuals*, 1st and 2nd respectively. See also *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 222.

To sum up, the Supreme experience (Parā Samvit) has a creative aspect (Shakti Tattva)—Sir John Woodroffe's "*The Garland of Letters*", Chap. X. Supreme Shiva-Shakti exists in mutual embrace and Love. Bliss is supreme. . . . This is the state of Shiva without Kalā (Niskala) or Parama Shiva Shiva is an experience of the Perfect universe" —*Ibid*. Shiva has two aspects, in one of which He is Transcendent and in the other Immanent. The creative (*sakala*) aspect of the Supreme Shiva is

After this, Māyā of Knowledge-Ignorance, vidya-avidyāmāyī, is created out of the Supermind or Vijnāna. Vidya or Overmind, which is the upper side of Māyā, is ineffable, and is the cause of the spiritual fulfilment of the Jiva. There is no conflict here though there are multiple modes of the Truth. Here the Trinity of God, Brahmā, Vishnu and Rudra support in a three-fold manner the three-fold power of Will, Knowledge and Action. Here there is also the Impersonal state which is the negation of all determinations and differentiations. Āchāryas like Shankara were absorbed only in the impersonal aspect of this status; the devotees, on the other hand, want to remain absorbed in the different poises, qualities and forms of Ishwara.³ Ignorance, Aparā-prakriti or Avidyā-māyā first appears at the end of Overmental projections. The Tantra speaks of five kinds of veils (kanchukas) in this field of ignorance or avidyā; they are kalā, kāla, niyati, vidyā and rāga. Here the Jiva

called *Shiva-Tattva*, wherein is the Shakti called *unmani*. Through operation in His creative aspect Shiva becomes His own object as the Manifest Universe."

—*Ibid.*

"The first emanation or manifestation (Ābhāsa) of and by consciousness is called the Sadākhyā or Sadāshiva Tattva. . . . The Supreme Experience changelessly endures even though in its creative aspect it gives birth to the universe. In Sadāshiva Tattva there is the commencement of the first subjective formation of ideas. It is the first step in evolution The This (*Idam*) is faintly perceived by the "I" (*Aham*) as part of the one self, the emphasis being therefore on the "I" side of experience. . . . This is the source whence the Avatārs come".—(*Ibid*).

"The third stage of the developing consciousness is '*Ishwara Tattva*'. . . . The universe (*Idam*) is experienced by the "I" (*Aham*) distinctly and yet as part of and not separate from the one self the emphasis here is on the '*Idam*'. This (*Idam*) is seen as part of the self, the two not being differentiated in the sense of inner and outer".—(*Ibid*).

"This (*Ishwara Tattva*) . . . is the ultimate object of adoration by all classes of worshippers under the name of Shiva or Mahāvishnu or the Devi as those call it who are filled with a passion of Her lotus feet".—(*Ibid*, Chap. XIII).

"The fourth Tattva is known as sadvidyā or *Suddhā vidyā*. In the experience of this stage, emphasis is equal on the "I" and "the This". . . . There is an equality of either term in an experience which is that of true relation of the *Aham* and the *Idam*, consisting of a synthesis (*sangam*)."

"Shiva and Shakti . . . in creation, whilst still remaining in themselves what They always are, project the universe which is Shakti and then we have the *Paramātmā* and *jīvātmā* consciousness. . . . The experience is compared to that of the Ishwara of the *Dvaitavādins*, who see the universe as different from Himself and yet as part of and in connection therewith".—(*Ibid*, Chap. X).

³ It may be noted here that Overmind or Māyā has a prominent place in Tantra-Shastra, but it has a meaning completely different from Shankara's Māyā. Sir John Woodroffe has exposed the position of Tantric Māyā very clearly in his "Garland of Letters":—

"Vedānta in its Shākta version says that all forms are the operative consciousness as Māyā-Shakti What one thinks one becomes . . . not only does thought operate modifications in and within the limits of particular types or species, but actually evolves such and all other types through the cosmic or collective Thought of which the universe is a material expression."

(Chap. XVI).

"As Professor Haeckel says in conformity with Shākta monism, Spirit and Matter are not two distinct entities, but two forms or aspects of one single fundamental substance (Brahman). The one entity with dual aspect is the sole Reality dual aspect as Chit-Shakti which represents the Spiritual and Māyā Shakti which represents the material aspect. The two exist in inseparable connection manifested Shakti or Māyā is the universe. She is in all systems, whether as Prakriti, Māyā or Māyā Shakti, the finitising principle, whereby forms are created."

(Chap. XIV).

fallen into the clutches of avidyā becomes subject to kalā or diminished action, kāla or time, niyati or fate, the so-called vidyā or poor knowledge and rāga or attachment. Sri Aurobindo has shown the beginning of Ignorance at the end of Overmind. The Jivas bewildered by Ignorance are moved by saṃskāras in the cycles of birth and action. The lower hemisphere of Mind, Life and Body begins from here. The field of Nature extends from Avidyā or Prakṛiti (Aparā) to the material body. The analysis of this field as given by Sāṃkhya has been adopted also by Tantra. Mahat or Buddhi evolves out of Aparā Prakṛiti, or original ignorance, where all the three Guṇas rest together in a sleep of equality. From Mahat comes the three-fold egoism, sāttwic, rājasic and tāmasic ; mind rises from sāttwic ego, the five organs of knowledge from the rājasic ego and the five tanmātras from the tāmasic ego. Again, the five organs of action come from the five organs of knowledge and the five Mahābhūtas from the five tanmātras. This analysis is widely prevalent and mostly accepted. These twenty-four tattvas of Sāṃkhya from Prakṛiti to the five Mahābhūtas are accepted also by Tantra. The Tantra does not regard these things as illusory, though they belong to the lower or impure creation.⁴

Thus Māyā in its twin principles is regarded as shuddha and ashuddha by Tantra as it is a creation of Vidyā and Avidyā. The Upper Māyā of the Overmental belongs to the Shuddha or pure principle while the lower Māyā or Ignorance is Ashuddha or impure. All the principles from Vidyā-Māyā and Shuddhā Vidyā to Sachchidānanda are regarded as Shuddha-Tattvas, pure principles, or Shuddha Adhwās, Pure ways, or shuddha bhuvans or pure worlds by Tantra.⁵ According to the Yoga philosophy of Sri Aurobindo the impure worlds also can be fully purified and transformed with the help of Shuddhā Vidyā or Supermind in conjunction with Vidyā Māyā or Overmind. As a result, a supramental divine creation becomes possible even in the lower worlds of Mind, Life and Body.

It may be mentioned here that the Tantra, like other systems of Indian Yoga, has accepted the Sāṃkhya analysis of the field of Nature. Greek philosophy at one time was influenced by the Sāṃkhya. Even the unseen Energy, which is posited by Modern Science at the source of the seen world, is only a new statement of the Mulā Prakṛiti or Pradhāna of Sāṃkhya. In the analysis of Nature and the philosophy of Nature, Sāṃkhya has an abiding place. But both Sri Aurobindo and Tantra say that this Prakṛiti of Sāṃkhya is Aparā Prakṛiti. The lower hemisphere is the domain of Aparā Prakṛiti, the whole of the higher hemisphere is the empire of Parā Prakṛiti. But Sri Aurobindo further adds that as the Aparā is derived from the Parā, the latter with all her powers can descend into the former and mould it into her own form.

⁴ "Impurity or Mala is ignorance and is of three kinds, namely, Mala, Māyā and Karma. (Chap. XXVII).

⁵ "All these regions have been created by Paramashiva for the enjoyments of Beings therein . . . there being an immense variety of beings in an ascending hierarchy from man up to the Supreme Lord and Lady of all. The Beings in the Pure Regions are wholly Pure and the others "Pure-Impure." (Chapter XXVII).

"Mantra Maheshwaras in Sadākhyā Tattva, Maheshwaras in Ishwar Tattva, Mantras in Shuddhāvidyā Tattva . . . Vidyeshwaras and Vijnanakalas (Overmental) below Shuddhāvidyā but above Maya. Pralayakalas in Māyā and Sakalas include other beings from Brahmā downwards." (Chapter XXVIII).

No doubt before this transformation can take place Aparā Prakriti has to go through a process of evolution through long cycles of ages. It is seen in this cyclic manifestation that after Māyā turns into the primary ignorance the mental worlds, the vital worlds and the psychic worlds are created one after another. Māyā is the Kāraṇa, the cause ; the subtle worlds, sukshma jagat, the mental and the vital arise out of that Kāraṇa. All the principles of the Sāṃkhya from the Mahat to the five tanmātras belong to the subtle world. After that the *sthula jagat* or the gross world arises out of the Sukshma. This description of the process of evolution refers to the spatial and temporal manifestation of the different planes of consciousness. After the origination of the gross material world Life and Mind involved and concealed in Matter proceed to manifest themselves again through a process of ascending evolution. The first process of creation is an involution, a descent of the Self through Māyā into Inconscience and Matter. At the second stage the process is reversed, it is the gradual ascent again from Matter towards the Self. It is this that is called Evolution by Sri Aurobindo. It is in the course of this evolution that the vital energy first appears in Matter in the form of plants and animals. After that Mind appears with life in man, the greatest of all living beings. By mind is not meant here simply the perceptive mind or the sense-mind, but this mind has discriminating intelligence as well as individuality. Manas, citta, ahaṃkāra and buddhi, these four faculties, fully developed, constitute the fully developed mind which we find in man who has an individual personality. Thus we find life appearing in plants and animals and mind appearing in man in the course of evolution in the material world.

But though man is the offspring of Manu and is made up of the substance of mind, he is born with the capacity of developing spirituality and spiritual power. Man has not only the faculty of mental intelligence and intellectual knowledge, there has appeared in him a spiritual experience of a higher level. As a result of this development the mental intelligence in him can get a reflection or glimpse of Intuition which is beyond mind, and even of Overmind which is beyond Intuition. Corresponding to the evolution of life from matter and of mind from life we find the evolution of different classes such as plants, animals and men. But in man we find the evolution of spiritual faculty proceeding not through man as a class but through the individual. There has been no development of individuality in sub-human beings or animals. But Nature has awakened individuality in man's genius and the faculty of ever new creation is a special characteristic of mental intelligence and buddhi. Nature has resorted to man for the highest and crowning development of individuality. Though the influence of this individual development gradually spreads to the whole race, yet that cannot take place without the special influence of the individual. But this development is possible only by *sādhana*.

At first man is born with his natural faculties and capacities. At that time the chief thing in his life is to preserve and develop his body and his life. At this stage his mind and intelligence remain mostly preoccupied with the satisfaction of his primary physical needs such as food and sleep. His mind remains always engrossed in the pursuit of physical comfort and enjoyment. This is his *dharma* which he has in common with the animal, and this is the general nature of mankind. When the human race appears

just after the animal, it is this animality which becomes prominent. Besides, though there has been spiritual development in individuals and mental development in the race, man as a race is still preoccupied with the animal *dharma* of food, sleep, etc., and the herding instinct of seeking for the preservation and utmost comfort of the gross material life of the family and the community. Man at this stage cannot show any special manifestation of his individuality: a half-educated, peaceful, communal life seems to be his highest social ideal.

That is why Tantra has given the name *Paśu*, animal, to the ordinary man. Man in his gross natural being is like an animal. His difference from the common animal lies in this that he has a general sense of mental individuality, and, at his best, he is a refined, cultured, social animal. He can do harm to others if he transgresses social discipline. At this stage there is nothing extraordinary in him; also there is no right development of his discriminating faculty. Only he is somewhat decent and self-controlled in his behaviour through the fear of social punishment. But his own power over the natural impulse of his vital-physical has not much developed at that time, nor is there evident much marked development of the intelligent mind beyond the ordinary rounds of a natural life. Sri Aurobindo calls such men vital-physical. Tantra has given the name *paśumānava*, animal man to the ordinary common man.

As long as there is the play of egoism or *ahamkāra*, man is *paśu*—even *sāttvic ahamkāra* is *ahamkāra*. It also is shielded from the higher consciousness, for the *sāttvic* ego is bound to the outer consciousness—our outer consciousness brings a limit to our evolution. We have to cross beyond this limit if we want to have the spiritual consciousness. In the outer consciousness we live as a separate mental, vital and physical being, and this separateness is connected with our ego-sense. But our ego is not our true self—that is a shell of our spiritual individuality, which is a portion of the Divine which has become the *Jiva*.

Man remains *paśu* as long as he lives in the outer consciousness of the mind, life and body. When no longer satisfied with the outer consciousness he turns to the inner truth and the inner power, then he transcends his *paśubhāva*. And this can only be achieved by *sādhana*. In the course of *sādhana* *paśubhāva* is rejected and there is the emergence of *Virabhāva*. According to Tantra this is the second step in the evolution of man. There can be a beginning of spiritual *sādhana* when one is still in the *paśubhāva*, but that can only be a stage of preparation, *prabartak avasthā*. Going beyond the *prabartak avasthā* one gradually attains the *sādhaka avasthā*. *Virabhāva* marks the first awakening in 'Tantric *sādhana*. At this stage man gets for the first time a contact with the inner consciousness beyond the body, life and mind. A new power then is infused into his *ādhāra*. When one is still in the *paśubhāva*, *āchāra*, rules, *dharma*, *karma*, rites are only aids to external discipline. But in the *virabhāva* the mantras and the rites cease to be mere habitual observances and become living and conscious. Being animated by the spiritual power of the Guru, the *sādhaka* feels always within him the vibration of a new power. The Guru at this time regulates his newly-awakened conscious force and gradually turns it upward. When *paśumānava* is turned into *viramānava*—that is his real initiation into humanity. Though even then he still continues to live in the field of external nature con-

stituted by the body, life and mind, yet he is no longer completely dominated by them. He proceeds gradually to extend full control and self-mastery of his will upon the external nature. Guru-shakti acts as the awakener of this *icchā-śakti* or will-power. And *icchāśakti* is *kundalini śakti*. A true man is able to control and regulate rightly his nature through his will-power. The waves of desire, anger, greed etc. rising from the lower nature can no longer disturb him. The automatic movements of the external and outward impulses of the body, life and mind become quiescent and there comes a complete rule of the will-power of the *sādhaka* over his body, life and mind. The *vira sādhaka* does no work impelled by the lower nature, he conducts himself according to another higher dispensation. As a result of this self-mastery over nature, the *sādhaka* can rise above all the weakness, smallness and fear of the ordinary man. Even death has no longer any terror for him.

It is worth noting here the distinction that a Tāntric Pandit has made between *paśubhāva* and *virabhāva* in a book named "*Kaulamārga-Rahasya*". Thus he writes ;—

"*Bhāva* is a mental condition ; one whose veil of *Avidyā* has not been removed even a little, who is full of the sense of dualism, *dwaita-bhāva*, who is merged in such *sanskāra* as 'I am the doer, I am the enjoyer, my son, my wealth, etc.,' is called a *paśu*. An animal (*paśu*) is kept tied with a rope : a being of this kind is also tied with the rope of *avidyā*, so he is a *paśu*. *Paśu* is of two kinds. A man who is under the world-delusion, who regards the gratification of the senses by some means or other as the highest good and goal of life, who does not go anywhere near spiritual knowledge or a knowledge of *dharma* and *adharma*—is the lowest *paśu*. And a man who believes in the scriptures, is habituated to righteous actions and has seeking for spiritual things is the highest *paśu*. But the man who having tasted even a drop of the nectar-sea of spiritual experience is striving to cut asunder the rope of *Avidyā* and goes in search of the nectar-sea, is known as *vira*. The mental condition of the *vira sādhaka* is called *virabhāva*. At this stage the sense of duality becomes a little weakened and the *sādhaka* gradually acquires the capacity to regard all things in the universe as being *vibhūti*s or powers of *Śiva-Śakti*. By getting rid of the *dwaitabhāva* or sense of duality altogether by *sādhana* he rises gradually to the *divyabhāva* or the divine status."

Many people point to the similarity between the *vira-bhāva* of Tantra and the ideal held up by Nietzsche and other German philosophers. But here there is a fundamental difference. The 'vira' of Nietzsche is an exaggeration of the ego and is solely bent upon aggrandising worldly power. On the other hand, the *vira* of Tantra is preoccupied with the extinction of the ego and the awakening of spiritual power. So the acquirement of egoistic power like the *aśura* is not the aim of Tāntric *sādhana* : this we must understand clearly, otherwise there is likely to be a confusion in the valuation of Tāntric philosophy. The Tāntric *vira sādhaka* rises above the threefold *sāttvic*, *rājasic* and *tāmasic ahamkāra* and awakens his spiritual individuality. The real emergence of the individuality occurs in *virabhāva*. So Arjuna of *Mahābhārata* or *Viveka-*

nanda of our age can be called a true *vira*. On the other hand, the *vira* of the Nietzschean ideal is typified in āśuric men like Hitler.

Vira Vivekananda, the lion of Vedānta, reached the top of Karmayoga though he had adopted sannyāsa, while Arjuna, as an instrument of Bhagavān Sri Krishna, could become the protagonist deciding the fate of India at a most critical moment in her history. The attitude which Arjuna was advised to adopt in the battlefield of Kurukshetra in the midst of hurtling shafts is the true attitude of the *vira*. To be able to follow the will of God, regarding with equality happiness and sorrow, profit and loss, victory and defeat, praise and blame is the true condition of the *vira*. It goes without saying that the state of the *vira* goes beyond the mere sāttwic condition. Receiving the touch of the trigunātita Śakti, the *vira* takes the intuition of the self as the highest standard, and social and moral rules become secondary. As adharma comes from avidyā, so dharma also is born of avidyā. Adharma is the consequence of the rājasic and tāmasic modes of avidyā, while dharma is the consequence of the sāttwic mode. In order to cross beyond avidyā, the *vira* has to cross the limits of all the three guṇas, sattwa, as well as rajas and tamas. His only resort is the self which is beyond the guṇas, beyond the body, life and mind, he proceeds by spiritual experience and the development of spiritual power. Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, "Fixed in Yoga do thy actions, having abandoned attachment." To do all actions, good or evil, abandoning all attachment is the sign of the *vira* yogin. Though Arjuna destroyed the family and killed his kinsmen and Gurus, he incurred no sin as he had no attachment. Not dharma or adharma as envisaged by society, but the following of the will of God and remaining established in the self which is beyond all virtue and sin,—that is the ideal of the *vira* sādhaḥka.

The *Kulārṇava Tantra* says ;—

"An embodied being cannot give up all activity: one who renounces the fruit of action is regarded as *tyāgi* or renouncer. He who has no egoism and in all his actions thinks that it is only the senses that are doing their own work, even though he does work, he is not involved in them. . . . Let all my friends and relations blame me, let my wife and children forsake me and all people laugh at me or let the king inflict punishment on me, I will go on serving Thee again and over again, O Supreme Mother, I will never give up Thy work, but will continue to do it with my mind, body and speech."

Giving up all desire for the fruits of action, firmly established in an inner equality the *vira* worker does action with the knowledge that the organs of action are doing the work, but that he himself is unattached. Whatever the world may say, regarding equally reward and punishment, he remains engaged with his mind, body and speech in the service of the Supreme Mother.

At this stage the *vira* sādhaḥka gradually realises that he is an instrument of the Divine. For this reason he remains free from the stain and attachment born of desire though he lives in the world and continues to do work. His *citta* preserves its equality even while it is exposed to all external contacts. Of course this is not accomplished in a day. Through

a gradual progress his equality becomes perfected. At the first stages it is nothing unnatural that there would be left some influence of desire in the mind and vital being of the spiritual worker and the man who is turning towards the spiritual life. The higher evolution of human nature is the central theme of the Tantra: so not by uprooting *prakṛiti*, but by disciplining it one has to rise upwards. This control becomes possible as detachment and equality gradually settle in the *citta*. Sri Aurobindo says;—

“We must not be in too furious haste to acquire even peace, purity and perfection. Peace we should have, but not the peace of a devastated nature”.

—(*Synthesis of Yoga*, Chap. XII)

Desire is the central force in the ordinary life of man. Even in order to conquer it, it may be necessary in certain cases and at certain times to exhaust it somewhat through *bhoga* or enjoyment. So the sādhaṅga offers his desire together with his *prakṛiti* to the Divine;—

“Whatever desire still troubles his being, he must, if he accepts the highest aim, put into the hands of the Lord within,—in effect, we find that once this is done, egoistic indulgence of desire is for some time allowed but only in order to exhaust itself and to teach the soul in the most unteachable part, the nervous, vital, material self, by the re-action of desire, by the grief and unrest contrasted with periods of the higher peace, that egoistic desire is not the law for the soul that seeks liberation. Afterwards, the elements of desire in these impulses will be thrown away and only their pure force of action with an equal delight in all work and result will be preserved. To act, to enjoy is the law and right of the nervous being; but to choose by personal desire its action and enjoyment is only its ignorant will, not its right. The Supreme and Universal Will within must choose.”

—(*Synthesis of Yoga*, Chap. VIII)

It is to this stage that the Kulārṇava Tantra referred when it said, “*bhogo yogāyate, moksāyate ca samsārah*”, enjoyment becomes Yoga, worldly life also does not cause bondage, the sādhaṅga can then live in the unattached self even in the midst of all action and enjoyment.

The Tāntric Yoga or Kundalīni-Yoga takes with it the whole of nature together with all its essential faculties and movements.⁶ That is why the

⁶ “It is to be noted that in the estimation of the practitioners of Kundalīni Yoga, it is the highest Yoga in which a perfect *samādhi* is granted by the Union with Shiva of both mind and body.”—(*The Serpent Power*, by Sir John Woodroffe, Chap. VI).

“... man is not only intellect. He has feeling and devotion. He is not only these, but has a body.”—(*Ibid*, Chap. VI).

“There are two lines of yoga The first class of Yoga is that in which ecstasy (*samādhi*) is attained by intellectual processes the second is that yoga in which the creative and sustaining Shakti of the whole body as kundalīni is actually and truly united with the Lord of Consciousness.”—(*The Serpent Power*, Chap. VII).

“The Shākta Tantra claims to give both enjoyment (*Bhukti*) in this and next world and liberation (*Mukti*) from all worlds.”—(*Ibid*, Chap. VII).

Tantric vira does not coerce nature but detaches himself from it and at the same time purifies and uplifts it by resorting to nature without attachment. Sri Aurobindo says ;—

“To raise nature in man into manifest power of spirit is its (Tantric) method and it is the whole nature that it gathers up for spiritual conversion. . . . First, it lays its hand firmly on many of the main springs of human quality, desire, action and it subjects them to an intensive discipline with the soul’s mastery of its motives as a first aim and their elevation to a diviner spiritual level as its final utility.”

—(The Synthesis of Yoga, Chap. XLIX).

The *sādhana* of *vira bhāva* continues as long as all the motives and impulsions of Nature are not brought under perfect self-control. The upward evolution of *divya-bhāva* begins when this control is achieved.

In the Gita Sri Krishna asks Arjuna first to practice Karmayoga abandoning all desire for the fruits of action ; he enjoins him to fight a violent battle while established in a state of equality beyond the three *guṇas* and above all the dualities. To win victory in this way and to taste “blood-stained enjoyments” as a king, still remaining free from all desire—that was the injunction of Sri Krishna himself. The Lord asks Arjuna to enjoy a prosperous kingdom while remaining unattached to all joy and sorrow. For when the soul is desireless, its peace cannot be disturbed even if enjoyments pour in in hundreds of currents. Like the sea, “which is ever being filled, yet ever motionless”, that self-realisation remains entire under all conditions. When the *vira kalpa* reaches its culmination, the *sādhaka* becomes fit for *divya-bhāva* and *sāyujya* or contact with the Divine.⁷ *Divya-bhāva* is also the Supreme secret of the Gita. In *divya-*

“To neglect or to deny the needs of the body, to think of it as something not divine, is to neglect and deny that greater life of which it is a part and to falsify the great doctrine of the unity of all and of the ultimate identity of matter and spirit.”—(*Ibid*, Chap. VII).

“Man, when seeking to be the master of himself, so seeks on all the planes, physical, mental, spiritual. . . . When the Mother is seen in all things, She is at length realised as She is when beyond them all. . . . In kundali-yoga enjoyment (*Bhoga*) and powers (*Siddhi*) may be had at each of the centres to which the Central Power is brought and by continuance of the practice upward the enjoyment which is Liberation may be had.”—(*Ibid*, Chap. VII).

“In kundali-yoga there is not merely a *Samādhi* through meditation, but through the central power of the *Jīva*, a power which carries with it the forces of both body and mind. . . .”—(*Ibid*, Chap. VII).

“Realisation is more speedily and truly attained by discerning Spirit in, and as, all being and its activities, than by fleeing from and casting these aside, as being either unspiritual or illusory and impediments in the Path.”—(*Ibid*, Chap. VII).

“Such a one recognises, as has been well said by Sriyut Aurobindo Ghose in the *Arya* that his life and the play of all its activities are not a thing apart, to be held and pursued egoistically for its and his own separate sake, . . . but his life and all its activities are conceived as part of the Divine action in Nature (*Shakti*) manifesting and operating in the form of man.”—(*Ibid*, Chap. VII).

⁷ “Whilst both the *Divya Yogi* and the *Vira Sādhaka* have enjoyment (*Bhukti*), that of the former is infinitely more intense, being an experience of Bliss itself The body in so far as it is represented by its central power . . . is actually united with Shiva. . . . The enjoyment of the *Vira Sādhaka* is but a reflection of it on the physical plane, a welling up of the true bliss through the deadening

bhāva the aim of the *sādhaka* is not merely to discipline the nature nor to preserve an attitude of non-attachment in the midst of all the movements of nature, but to surrender himself with all his nature integrally to the Supreme and the Divine Mother. So this was the crowning word of Sri Krishna to Arjuna ;—

“Abandon all *dharma* and take refuge in me alone”.

Entire surrender is the devotional movement natural to the heart. This unconditional devotion or *parānurakti* to Ishwara and Ishwari finds its culmination in *divya-bhāva*. We find the utmost plenitude of this *bhāva* in the lives of Sri Radha, Sri Chaitanya, Christ and Ramkrishna. Jiva then wants nothing but the Divine. He then wills only what the Divine wills. He has a direct perception of the Divine in the heart of his heart. In the language of the Gita, he then sees his own self as the “most beloved” of the Divine. This condition of the Jiva is his highest state in the world. Thus Prakriti in the course of the upward evolution of the human soul manifests her form of *shuddha-bhāva*. For we must not forget that the human soul or the individual is the highest manifestation in the upward evolution of nature. That condition in which the Jiva attains the true consciousness is the highest condition of Prakriti. Then the Jiva as a representative of whole Prakriti can proceed from higher to still higher evolution. With the Jiva his nature also proceeds upward in this way towards the Infinite.

When man is still *paśu mānava*, Prakriti sleeps in him as inconscient or subconscient body, life and mind. Prakriti allows him to move only in rounds of mechanical habits and instincts. The *vira mānava*, finding the self above the body, life and mind, wants to establish control over nature and to rouse her from her sleeping state.

But the divine man established in *divya bhāva*, getting a vision of the Paramātman deep within his self surrenders himself and his nature to him. As a consequence, Prakriti is fully awakened—the sleeping Prakriti once awakened rushes upward to get the touch of Paramātman. This upward ascent of Prakriti is the ultimate stage of evolution.

Only then there is the true emergence of the individuality of man. The mental man is only the external garb of the real man who is hidden in a deep cave inside—this man is the Jivatman or *antarātman*. It is this *antarātman* behind the external nature that is going along with Prakriti in the course of evolution. This is the real “I” of man. Sri Ramakrishna used to call it “*pākā āmi*”; Sri Aurobindo calls it the Psychic being or *chaitya purusha*. All the rounds of man’s birth, nay, all the evolutionary manifestation of Nature—are they not for the birth and development of the psychic being? We put the question, who would have known Nature if man had not been born? And man does not mean merely his ego constituted by his body, life and mind. Man is *antarātman*, his psychic

coverings and trammels of matter. Again, whilst it is said that both have liberation (*mukti*), this word is used in *Vira Sādhana* in a figurative sense only, a *Bhāva* or feeling of momentary union of Shiva and Shakti which ripens in the Higher Yoga-Sādhana into the literal liberation of the Yogi. . . . He (*Divya*), in its fullest and literal sense, has both enjoyment (*Bhukti*) and liberation (*Mukti*).”
—(*Ibid*, Chap. VII).

being, and it is this which has been called soul by Sri Aurobindo. This soul or ātman is a conscious being and an eternal portion of the Divine, "*mamaivamsa sanātana*" (Gita). Though man in his infinite being as eternal portion of the Divine is ever existing in the supramental plane, yet he wants to realise himself newly through the evolution of Nature. And it is for this that he has descended as a soul into nature. For the meaning of creation lies in the manifestation of soul in nature. In the material level of nature it remains half asleep; on the mental level in man only there is a glimpse of the soul. It is only in the sadhaka that the soul can awaken gradually. Divya bhāva is the own *bhāva* of this soul or antarātmān. In the awakening of *divyabhāva*, there comes a new awakening of the soul. Sri Aurobindo says:—

"The psychic being is soul growing in the evolution as it develops life in matter, mind in life, until finally mind can develop into overmind and overmind into the supramental truth. It supports the nature in its evolution through these grades."

(From a letter written to a *sādhaka*)

Also in the *divya-bhāva* of Tantra there is the awakening of this antarātmān, and it reaches its highest goal in *divya-siddhi*; that is also the highest consummation and fulfilment of Prakriti. In *vira bhāva* the soul in nature remains as a calm and unperturbed witness in all the upward upheavings of nature and remains established in equality in the midst of all action; but in *divya-bhāva* the soul receives in its inner being the direct contact of Purushottama, the Lord of Nature or of the supreme Ādyā Śakti. At that time all his consciousness is turned inward and all his faculties spontaneously turn towards the Divine. This is the first sign of the emergence of the divine consciousness.

In Sri Aurobindo's Yoga philosophy this is the starting point of the sadhana. But in Tantric philosophy the sadhana reaches consummation from here. We shall reach the royal gates of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo when we have first considered the goal of Tantric Yoga. The primary object of Tantric philosophy and Tantric sadhana is ascent—to reach beyond the impure nature-born physical-vital-mental worlds towards the superhuman and supernatural worlds constituted by Parāprakriti. The involution of the Jivātman in material nature and its evolution into the conscient world is called by Tantra the *Līlā* of Mahāmāyā. In other systems the upward ascent of the Jiva culminates in complete Kaivalya-moksha, but in Tantric philosophy, it is possible to take with the Jivatman to the higher regions of the Parāprakriti even the essential elements of his aparā prakriti constituted by body, life and mind. After that is attained sāyujya or intimate union of Jiva with Ishvara and of Jiva-prakriti with Mahā-Vidyā or Mahāmāyā. The result of this union is not Kaivalya-moksha, it is the state of *parā mukti* and *parā bhukti*. For the eternal source of Purusha and Prakriti is the bliss of the union of Siva and Śakti—this bliss is the eternal attribute of the beginningless and endless *sāyujya* of Visvaśakti and Viśvesvara. The Jiva and his prakriti reach their highest fulfilment by attaining this supreme Bliss. Whether this state is advaita, visistādvaita or dvaitādvaita—Tantra has not entered into any such controversy. For the Tantra says that each

Jiva is a Vibhuti of Śiva. Jiva attains to his true being when he crosses beyond Māyā and reaches Vidyā above Avidyā. In that true being he is one of the infinite forms of Śiva. Jiva is an eternal portion of Parama Śiva. A part has the same nature as that of which it is a part, so in that state divinity is the inalienable nature of Jiva. In that nature he can remain merged in Parama Śiva in Advaita state, or can exist in a pure conscient form as a special centre of Parama Śiva, or for the sake of Ānanda can enter into a relation of dvaita-advaita identity *cum* difference with Parama Śiva—all these then are different modes of play, different waves of the nature of Sachchidananda.

In the sadhana of *divyabhāva* the psychic being or antarātmān has direct union with the Divine—so the Divine takes up the Jiva into the higher world through the attraction of the Vidyā Śakti above Māyā. Then the embodied soul enjoys the taste of samādhi in the world constituted by Śiva-Śakti—and gets through samādhi the perennial nectar that is flowing there. We see these signs of samādhi in the lives of men who have attained siddhi. When they get out of samādhi, they move and live in the worlds as Jivanmuktas. Siddha Yogins are “paramhamsas” or parama Jivas. They are not bound to anything. As long as they remain in the world, they remain as centres of Mahā-śakti through the power of samādhi. Some of them live as devotees, some as jnanis, but in the yoga of the antarātmān they are always established at the centres of all the spiritual states.

When the siddha Yogin remains out of trance, he sees the worlds and all the beings of the world as constituted by Śiva-Śakti—his course of life then becomes an instrument of play of the cosmic power. His will then becomes one with the cosmic will. The life of a Jivan-mukta siddha-Tantric has been described in detail in the *Kulārṇava Tantra*. We quote here a few isolated passages from the book :—

“All the activities of the person who is steadfast in the consciousness of the unity of the self are so many forms of worship, all his thoughts and imaginations are so many mantras, all his seings amount to meditation. When the egoistic identification with the body is dissolved and the supreme self is cognised, all the movements of the mind become states of samādhi or trance. The god installed in the temple of the body is no other than Sadāśiva himself. When one is involved in sin he is called Jiva, when freed from sin he is Sadāśiva. That supreme Yogin is established in equality being freed from all joy and sorrow, all desire has gone out of him, he is ever satisfied, equal-visioned and has conquered his senses. For the Kaulika or Tantric siddha puruṣa there is no rule for what is to be done and what is not to be done, he is equally beyond virtue and sin, neither hell nor heaven is for him, O Kulesvari. Whatever he wills is always realised . . . in various disguises these siddha Yogins roam about doing good to all creatures: they sometimes behave as mad men or dumb men or idiotic men, sometimes speechless, sometimes immobile like a stone. They drink all things like the Sun, eat all things like fire, they take all kinds of enjoyments, yet are not stained by sin. As the wind remains pure though it touches all things, as the sky pervades all space, as the river allows all persons to bathe in it, so

the Kula Yogin remains always pure under all circumstances like the wind, the sky and the river . . . They have conquered sorrow by their satisfaction in the self, they are free from all conflicts and jealousies, they know the secrets of Kulakundalini, are devoted to Śakti and find ecstatic delight in Her."

After attaining supreme devotion as well as the knowledge of non-duality, the siddha puruṣas reach the condition of Isvarakoti—as long as they remain in the world ; after that all their action or inaction is filled with the influence of samādhi—their external behaviour may often appear like that of a child, or an idiot, a mad man or a piśācha, but their inner being is always full of a divine knowledge and supreme devotion to Paramesvari. This is the condition of the perfected Yogin according to the Tantra. After leaving the body according to the Divine Will, they attain to the supreme status. And that ends the Tantric evolution.

Now the goal of Sri Aurobindo's integral Yoga will be more clear to us.

Sri Aurobindo and the Philosophy of Integral Yoga.

Though *Kaivalya moksha* is not the goal envisaged by Tantric philosophy, there is no doubt that its primary aim is to ascend to the Śiva-Śakti *loka*—but this ascension is not possible for the whole human race by any turn of the cosmic cycles. A few perfected great souls or a group of sadhakas may be blessed with the ānanda of samādhi and sādharma of Isvara after the fall of the body, but that has no direct effect in the upper evolution of the external nature and of humanity as a race. If after the stupendous effort of evolution for millions and millions of years, Nature consummates her *Lilā* in the life of only one or of a few perfected beings, then the issue of this great creation evolving through ages must be regarded as insignificant. So Sri Aurobindo writes in his article "*The Significance of Rebirth*"—(*Lines of Karma*)—

"The Tantric solution shows us a supreme super-conscious energy which casts itself out here into teeming worlds and multitudinous beings and in its order the soul rises from birth to birth and follows its million forms till in a last human series it opens to the consciousness and powers of its own Divinity and returns through by a rapid illumination to the eternal super-conscience. We find at last the commencement of a satisfying synthesis, some justification of existence . . . a use and a sufficient though temporary significance of the great motion of the cosmos . . . But there is a too minor stress on the soul's divine potentialities, a haste of insistence on the escape into superconscience ; the supreme energy constructs too long and stupendous a preparation for so brief and so insufficient a flowering . . . some secret is still missing."

It is true we find in the Tantra the secret of the upward ascension of Nature, but there is not here the ideal of the integral transformation of Nature, and it is here that "some secret is still missing." We find this

secret fully and clearly revealed in the integral Yoga philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo says that evolution, the gradual ascent of Nature is only one side of creation, but there is another side, the aspect of involution or gradual descent and unless we look at that other half of the truth of creation will remain sealed to us. We have the steps of the gradual descent of Sachchidānanda—Vijnāna or Supermind comes from Sachchidānanda, Overmind Māyā from Supermind, Mind from Māyā and all the twenty-four principles from Prakriti. In this involutionary process in creation, closing with the pure overmental, the whole process from lower Māyā down to the material terrestrial appears in the veils of ever-increasing ignorance. Therefore in the movement of Nature's evolution there is a turning from ignorance to knowledge, an ever-increasing movement in a reverse direction towards knowledge. But when the human soul unites with the Paramātmān in the course of its upward evolution and when the human nature completing its course becomes identified with Paraśakti, that ascent of the soul becomes the only movement of Prakriti, She has another fruitful movement, that is a new involution of the supramental being and the supramental power, that is a new creation, a divine creation. This new involution is the creation of Vidyā-avidyāmayi Māyā starting at the end of overmind. It is a new, a divine creative conception of the Vijnānamayi Mother. It is virtually a new chapter in creation. This involution can be called Divine involution or divine descent, involution here is the manifestation of a direct descent. Paramesvara and Paramesvari descend into this world through the supramental being and the supramental power. Paraśakti descends into this triple abode of body, life and mind through the mind, with their direct and uncovered truth. The truth that is the plane of Sadāśiva Īśvara and Suddha Vidyā—that great truth directly manifest in this mundane world. This is the supreme manifestation, Avatāravāda or Incarnation. Again, as Vijnānamaya Divine and Vidyāmayi Mother can descend into this world in their own form, they can also manifest in the human being. Vijnāna Śakti descends, in the next step, into the perfected human soul and as a consequence of this the soul attains supramental realisation not only in his antarātmān or his inner being but also in his mind, life and body—his mind then becomes over-mind, a concentrated centre of visva-prajñā, his life becomes a vast sea of viśvānanda, his body becomes *chinmaya*, a luminous and clear vessel free from disease, old age and death.

Not a retreat from the cosmos towards Parama Śiva, but a direct descent of the Parā-Śakti of Parama Śiva—this is what is fully revealed in the integral Yoga philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. We see the manifestations of this supreme truth in the evolution of Nature, the descent of Parā Prakriti as spoken of by Sri Aurobindo. This is the new Veda, a new divine philosophy and it is unique. We call it the new Veda though there are hints in the Vedas, Upanishads and the Tantras, bringing the higher principles into the world of Nature—*Īśā vāsyam aham sarvam*—yet the possibility of the complete conversion and transfiguration of the natural stuff in the natural world was not envisaged in the Vedas or ages of illumination. In the Vedas we find the rays of the Sun of Truth gradually moulding themselves into mental formations, even we find the intensest ecstasy of Ānanda symbolised in the *soṃā* wine poured

the vital ; here there are hints about the transformation of the mind and the vital, but there is no reference in the Vedas to the awakening of the material particles of the material body into consciousness or of bodies constituted by the concentrated rays of the Sun of Truth. In Tantra there are plenty of descriptions about the flooding of the bodily world with streams of nectar rising from the ecstatic union of Paraprakriti with Siva after the soul rises beyond the three guṇas—by that flooding the body becomes pure, free from disease and old age, and long-lived, but the complete immortalisation of the body could not be achieved even by Tantric sadhana. In Tantra there is a purification of the nature due to the removal of the stains and sins caused by karma, but unless one reaches the summit of the upward evolution, the minutest impurities inherent in the stuff of Nature cannot be completely removed as long as one lives in this world. But Sri Aurobindo says that there is in the supramental Śakti the capacity for the complete purification even of nature. Prakriti is constituted by the three guṇas, sattva, rajas and tamas. As a first result of the descent of the supermind, the three guṇas of Prakriti are completely changed. Then sattva becomes the pure revelation (not a covering made up of śuddha sattva) of śuddha vidyā. Rajas becomes the pure tapas of chit-śakti—this tapas śakti creates a new cosmic centre. And tamas becomes spiritual peace. These new guṇas do not belong to the lower nature—these are the supernatural attributes of Vijnānamayi Parā Prakriti. Simultaneously with the conversion of these guṇas of Prakriti and the illumination of the energy of Nature, all the vibrations and movements of that energy undergo a transformation. As a consequence of this all the natural atoms and molecules rising out of these divine vibrations take altogether new forms. Then not only purification, but even transformation becomes possible. Mind, life and body born out of Nature become moulded into the forms of the divine Nature—even the atoms and molecules of the material body become free from the clouds of tamas, and, as a result of this, they are given a new shape by the luminous particles of divine consciousness. The solidity of the body then is no longer the inertia of tamas—it becomes bright, golden, supramentalised, it is chit or conscious force which becoming concentrated takes there the form of matter. Such a body is naturally free from old age and death—it is the supramental will which forms the solid body for the play of the creation and then merges it in the infinity after the cessation of the play.

This descent of the supramental power into the world is not for any individual perfection—Prakriti has many times in the past attained that realisation through moksha sādhanā—but that did not lead to the upward evolution of the human collectivity. But when there is the supramental transformation in any individual, a new vibration is created in the world and in life, and that turns a new cycle and inaugurates a new era. This transformation in the field of nature exerts its influence over the whole of Nature, the perfection of one spreads to others. In this way a few perfected spiritual communes are created, and they become the centres of the eternal divine consummation. The social life outside these perfected divine communes is also indirectly benefited by this—the atmosphere of the whole earth is then changed and the earth is again turned into a sacred place. We can say that this is the establishment of the eternal

living centre of the supreme Divine and his Shakti in the created world, an eternal abode of the Divine Shakti and the spiritual consciousness on the earth. When this is realised, there will come a Satya Yuga when an immutable and imperishable divine kingdom will be established on earth.

According to Sri Aurobindo, this is the inevitable evolution of earth and nature ; for this two things are needed—one is the integral self-surrender of the psychic being and the opening of all parts of the Jiva-prakriti to the Divine Mother, the other is the Divine Grace acting from above. It is this self-surrender which makes possible the descent of the divine power. The integrality of the perfection depends on the integrality of the descent of the divine power. We find this integrality in the integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. Thus Tāntric Yoga finds its completion and fulfilment in Integral Yoga. The missing link in Tantra is fully revealed here.

It may be asked why this transformation was not possible in the past and where is the proof that it will be accomplished now. The proper answer to such questions is that all past sādhanā and all previous upward evolution of Nature have been a gradual preparation for this new transformation. The Divine is gradually preparing Nature through an unthinkable plan and process for this divine birth and the manifestation of the divine consciousness. It is not the divine intention to leap over the necessary gradations. This great transformation can only be accomplished by the supreme will of the Divine and not by any human conception, sādhanā or effort. In the words of the Tantra, it is the free and spontaneous will and dispensation of Parameśvara and Parameśvari that has decided when the Śākta-Mahāsarga or the direct supreme creation of chit-śakti will be realised—in this matter it is of no use to indulge in speculation. Still this inevitable future of divine transformation of Nature has been seen by Sri Aurobindo in his divine vision, and he has expressed it in his new Veda and his new philosophy. For the present, it is the duty of all people to have unflinching faith in this and to wait with deep veneration for the advent of the Avatāra in his supramental form. We can expect at least this much from all peoples and communities who have faith in the spirit and the spiritual future of humanity. So we have to accept the following as the words of the Divine and fill ourselves with faith and aspiration :—

“ . . . There is needed an entire remoulding of what we are, into a way of power of the Divine Supernature. The integration of our being cannot be complete unless there is the transformation of the dynamic action ; there must be an uplifting and change of the whole mode of Nature itself and not only some illumination and transmutation of the inner ways of being.

An eternal Truth-consciousness must possess us and sublimates all our natural modes into its own modes of being, knowledge and action ; a spontaneous truth-awareness, truth-will, truth-feeling, truth-movement, truth-action can then become the integral law of our nature.”

(*The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Chap. XIV)

